THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST

Volume VII JULY, 1944 Number 3

A NOTE ON THE IMPERIAL RECORD DEPARTMENT

THE Imperial Record Department is the custodian of the Government of India's archives and is responsible for the care, preservation, and superintendence of all official papers belonging to the various agencies of the central government. It is under the administrative control of the Department of Education, Health and Lands and is neither an independent government agency nor a public record office as is the National Archives of Washington. However, like the latter, it is an integral part of the central administration, and is an institution designed to serve government officials as well as the scholarly public in their quest for fresh lights on problems, administrative and historical.

I. *Early History*

The first formal date in the history of the department is May, 1891, when with the sanction of the home government definitive steps were taken by the Government of India for concentrating in one central office all its extant muniments which had till then been lying scattered in the various secretariat offices at Calcutta. The scope of the new office at the start was limited to cataloguing, classification, and arrangement of records and the Government of India made it quite clear in their basic proposal to the Secretary of State that they had no intention of building up an expensive establishment like the Public Record Office of England. The Record Office thus started its career in a very humble way. It was allotted a staff of eight clerks and about half a dozen rooms in the ground floor of the Imperial Secretariat Building at Calcutta. But the office was fortunate in having Mr. (afterwards Sir) George Forrest as its organizer and first officer-in-charge. Forrest had already built up an admirable record office in Bombay and had carried on an extensive survey of the Foreign and

Military Department records at Calcutta. Besides he had published three magnificent volumes of state papers relating to Warren Hastings' administration and had made a careful study of archival practice in England. His first care and attention was directed to reducing into consultable order the vast accumulation of the past and repairing the mischief caused by former indifference and neglect. But he also found time to launch the gigantic scheme of press-listing all records of the East India Company down to 1800, to compile and print three large volumes of state papers dealing with Lord Clive and the early days of the company, and to collect a mass of materials on the Sepoy Mutiny from the Military Department records which were later published in four volumes. It is also to Forrest's initiative that we owe the preservation of the unique collection of correspondence in Oriental languages which now forms one of the proudest possessions of the department. Forrest held office for eight years, but within this short period he had laid the foundations of a full-fledged record office.

Mr. Samuel Charles Hill (1899-1903), who succeeded Forrest and whose subsequent distinguished career in England is another story, zealously continued the tradition created by his illustrious predecessor. He enriched the institution with many new acquisitions, most noteworthy among which are a complete set of the Calcutta *Gazette* dating back to 1786 and a number of old maps of Calcutta relating to the years 1723-1842, and unearthed a mass of new materials which formed the nucleus of his monumental volumes on Bengal during the stirring days of 1756-1757. Among his other important works may be mentioned the *Abstract of Early Records of Foreign Department 1756-1762*, *List of Europeans in the English Factories in Bengal*, and *The Life of Claud Martin*. Not the least among his achievements were the reforms he introduced in the methods of preservation; it was due to him that the department committed itself to the ambitious program of flattening the entire series of its folded records.

The systematic cataloguing of the various classes of records was planned and commenced by the next officer-in-charge, Dr. Charles Robert Wilson, with whom also originated the grand idea of printing in extenso a number of important records. The ill health which cut short his promising career also prevented him from carrying the idea into execution, and his posthumous volumes on Old Fort William in

Bengal, excellent as they are, bear but an inadequate testimony to the extensive research he had done. But his other brilliant scheme, that of calendaring the entire series of Persian records was taken up by his successor, Mr.(later Sir) E. Denison Ross, who formulated the detailed plan for the work and published the first two volumes of the series under his personal supervision. Ross was also responsible for completing the cataloguing work begun under his predecessor and compiling a press list of the Select Committee's records. To Mr. A. F. Scholfield, who succeeded him, belongs the credit of compiling a number of press lists of the Foreign Department's records and preparing an excellent consolidated index to the public series of press lists. But more particularly will he be remembered for the salutary changes he introduced in the method of archives-keeping and treatment of old records. Mention may be made in this connection of the replacement of the old method of mending documents with tracing paper by that of repair with chiffon.

Forrest, Hill, Wilson, Ross, Scholfield—they were the real makers of the present record office. A full account of their achievements, which is likely to fill a volume, is beyond the scope of the present sketch. But it would not be an exaggeration to say that much of the present glory of the institution should be traced to the impetus that these pioneers had given it when they started it on its illustrious career. Time has long gone by when the department was still struggling to overcome the difficulties of its uncertain youth. It is now the biggest, the best equipped, and the best organized record office in India and is playing a much more important and inspiring role in the intellectual life of the country than was conceived by its promoters. In consequence of the sweeping changes which its policy has undergone during the past five years, the department has taken upon itself an ambitious program with the object of making its rich possessions available to the world of scholars and of stimulating among the general public a true archivist sentiment, a warm admiration of the country's past. Thanks to this new policy the department has become not only the center of archival work in the country but a veritable place of pilgrimage for all archivists and workers in modern Indian history.

II. *Resources of the Archives Office*

Before proceeding to describe the present activities of the department, it would not be out of place to give an account of its resources

both in manuscript records and in printed documents. The former includes the ancient papers of the East India Company consisting of about 26,000 bound volumes and 1,505,000 unbound documents, the whole covering as many as 17,902,000 folios. The department also houses the major portion of the current records of the various agencies of the central government down to the year 1941, available mostly in print. The number is on the increase, thanks to annual accessions, and the latest available figures for the volumes and bundles of records accommodated in the department are 61,000 and 29,000, respectively. The whole series now occupies almost thirteen miles of shelf space. Hardly less deserving of notice are the printed publications in the library section of the department now totaling above 75,000 volumes, which have lately been classified and catalogued according to the decimal system. These include not only books of general interest but also rare blueprints, parliamentary papers, and a unique collection of no longer easily accessible works on the India of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Although the main archival series in the department begin only from 1748, copies of a large number of interesting collections relating to the earlier years (some of which go as far back as the seventeenth century) have been acquired from the India Office with a view to filling in the lacunae. Among these acquisitions specially deserving of notice are the volumes containing abstracts of correspondence between the East India Company and their servants in India between 1707 and 1748. The correspondence for later years is available in the original in an unbroken series and constitutes a unique source for the modern period of Indian history. Hardly of less interest to the historian is the series known as Original Consultations, among which is to be found the minutes, memoranda, and proposals drawn up by the East Indian administrators and their correspondence with their agents all over the country, revealing not only the inner working of the various administrative machinery but also the social, political, and economic conditions of the time. Especially fascinating to the student of anthropology and geography would be the records relating to the travellers, explorers, and other field workers who came to India in quest of new light. Mention may be made in this connection of the papers on Csoma de Koros, the Hungarian traveller (1831-1832), and the famous Schlagentweit brothers (1861), the excellent work of Major Leech on the Hindi dialect of Bundelkhaund (1844),

Captain Mackenzie's fascinating account of the Gond, Kurku, and Nihal dialects (1873), and Captain Lane's learned report on the Manbhow sect (1874). For the orientalist a wealth of useful materials is provided by the thirty attractive volumes of Turki manuscripts acquired by the late Sir E. Denison Ross from Central Asia as also by the magnificent collection of Oriental letters ranging from 1764 to 1873 to which a reference has already been made. Most of these letters are in Persian but a great many are also available in Sanskrit, Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Burmese, and even in Chinese, Siamese, and Tibetan. The bibliophile as well as the archivist will be delighted and enthralled by the original manuscripts and first drafts of world-famous works like Prinsep's *Alexander's Expedition to India,* Alexander Burne's *Memoir on the Indus*(*1831*), Syme's *Embassy to Ava*(*1800*), Anderson's *Mission to Sumatra,* Malcolm's *Memoir on Malwa,* and Tod's monographs on the Pindaris. Among other treasures in which the department can justly take pride are a number of exquisitely lettered and artistically illuminated manuscripts, a representative collection of which is now on display in show-cases along with other noteworthy public documents.

It was Grant Duff who once spoke of the East India Company's records as the "best historical materials in the world," and what he said more than a century ago, perhaps applies today with even greater force to the records preserved in this department. Indeed, it will not be too much to say that no documented study of any aspect of Indian life can be regarded as complete which has not fully utilized this unique storehouse of information.

III. *Preservation of Records*

We may now turn to the measures taken by the department for the protection and preservation of this rich heritage from the past. The building which now houses the records is situated on the Queensway, New Delhi, and conforms in the main to the plan drawn up by Sir Edwin Lutyens and A. F. Scholfield. The front portion of the building is an imposing two-storied structure of extremely strong and heavy construction in which are located the office, the laboratory, the reading, and the research rooms of the department. The stack area for the records is an adjoining three-storied building resting on a steel frame which also carries the weight of the steel shelves with

which each story has been fitted. The windows in the area are furnished with wrought-iron grills and the main entrances with collapsible steel doors. As a precaution against fire the whole building has been provided with fire-fighting equipment which includes an automatic sprinkler system for the stack area, a number of minimax extinguishers, and a siren alarm. A staff has been adequately trained in the up-to-date methods of fire-fighting. Among other plans which are being considered by the Government of India for affording further protection to its archives, but which obviously cannot be implemented during the present emergency, may be mentioned the installation of an air-conditioning plant designed to eliminate dust from the muniment rooms and to control the temperature and humidity of the air which is normally far from the optimum during the major part of the year. As a check to the dust nuisance the department is at present using a number of vacuum cleaners in the record rooms.

Every possible care is taken to afford each individual document in the stacks the maximum amount of protection. The most delicate among these are deposited in boxes specially made for the purpose, while those in a good state of preservation are kept in bundles bound with strong wooden or synthetic boards. All unbound documents are wrapped in protective shell-covers. An exception is provided by the folded records of the early period, a large number of which are opened, flattened, and sewed into protective covers each year. The damaged and badly preserved documents are repaired according to the most approved scientific methods, usually with chiffon and Japanese tissue paper. The tremendous amount of work accomplished by the preservation branch of the department will easily be gathered from the last three years' figures of repair done: the number of folios rehabilitated in 1940 was 170,000; in 1941, 280,000; while the figure for 1942 was 680,000. With a view to speeding up the repair work still further and to affording the records better protection, the department has decided to introduce lamination with cellulose acetate foil by means of a hydraulic press which has been tried in America with very satisfactory results. The work however cannot be taken up for the present owing to the unavailability of the necessary apparatus.

Other duties of the preservation branch include rebinding of worn volumes, treatment of leather bindings with preservative chemicals, and the periodic fumigation of records with thymol and paradichlorobenzene as a protection against attacks from mildew spores and insect

pests. The department still lacks a proper vacuum fumigating vault although it intends to install one as soon as the machinery is available. But pending its introduction the fumigation is being done in several improvised cabinets and an air-tight steel almirah equipped with the necessary contrivances. As a further precaution against ravages of insects naphthalene bricks are being extensively used in the open shelves as well as in the pamphlet boxes. Anxious as the department has always been to safeguard its valuable treasures from the consequences of decay, it accepted in 1937, an ambitious scheme of typing out all its faded and brittle documents. With the same object in view it has recently acquired microfilming apparatus and expects to begin filming the records as soon as the machinery and its accessories are installed.

IV. *Laboratory and Technical Research*

The department formerly relied on the advice of the experts in foreign countries regarding all technical questions. But convinced, in view of the peculiar climatic conditions in India, of the need of carrying on experiments on its own account, it has recently established a research laboratory. The regular program of the laboratory includes examination, analysis, and selection of Japanese tissue paper, chiffon, leather preservative dressing, and other repairing materials which are finally used for the rehabilitation of records, as well as research on the composition of old and modern papers and on the chemical methods of restoring faded writings. Among the more important investigations conducted in the laboratory mention may be made of those on the effect of different chemicals on insects like *gastrallus indicus*. The department has succeeded in developing a type of insecticidal paper for the protection of books and documents against insects and fungi. The paper is prepared by sizing it in a chemical bath, trimming it to the exact size of a book, and placing it between the flyleaves and covers, which are particularly susceptible to insect attack. The function of the paper base is to retain the insecticidal chemicals and to develop a local concentration of lethal gas strong enough to kill the grubs, particularly of *gastrallus indicus*, as well as to prevent further infestation. It has also been found that mildew cannot develop in its presence even at a very high humidity and that the ink and fiber of even the most delicate documents are not adversely affected by the chemicals.

The laboratory is rapidly widening its scope of work owing to

the increasing number of inquiries it receives each year from outside agencies and public institutions about practical problems of preservation. Of the experiments undertaken on behalf of such agencies especially worthy of note are those made with the worm-eaten palmleaf manuscript sent by the Governmental Oriental Library, Mysore. Experiments have convinced the department of the efficacy of fumigation with paradichlorobenzene in curing palmleafs of the after-effects of mildew and insectal attacks.

V. *The Record Office and the Official Bodies*

Hardly less important than the duties connected with the preservation of records are those which the department has to discharge in facilitating their use in the day-to-day business of the central government. These duties, heavy as they are, are steadily on the increase, as will be clear from the figures given below:

	1900	1907	1931	1940	1942
1. Number of requisitions complied with	6,000	11,000	20,000	24,000	25,000
2. Number of papers restored	6,000	10,000	18,000	20,000	19,000

Mention also may be made in this connection of the extensive research undertaken by the department on behalf of official agencies searching for fresh facts to illumine current administrative problems. Such investigations form part of the daily routine of the department, which can rightly take pride in the important, if indirect, part it has been playing in facilitating the work of administration.

VI. *Relations with the World of Scholarship*

More noteworthy from the standpoint of the scholar are the various measures taken by the department to render its valuable treasures accessible to research. Indeed it has never looked upon the records as a miser's hoard. Even as early as 1900 the principle had been fairly established that the record office should give as much information as it could to outsiders on matters of research. It was not until 1939, however, that the momentous step was taken by the Government of India of throwing open the portals of their muniment rooms. The immediate effect of this measure was to render available for research all records of the central government from the earliest times to 1880. The response created by this new policy among the

scholarly public can be easily measured by the progressive increase in the number of research workers visiting the reading room of the department. Since 1940 no less than one hundred students have conducted research among the records in the central custody, and the excerpts released during this period exceed 43,000 sheets of typescripts of foolscap size. The department has considerably reduced the task of the scholar by providing him with a descriptive handbook to the records, a complete set of catalogues for all the different classes of documents, and press lists for some of the series. But the department intends to do more and has taken up the compilation of a comprehensive index for all its records from the earliest times to 1858, which when completed, will furnish the public with a book of reference on India more detailed and more elaborate than anything hitherto attempted. Two volumes of indexes to the revenue records (1830-1859) already published under the scheme have won the approbation of both oriental and occidental scholars.

VII. *Publication Program and Indian Historical Records Commission*

A reference has already been made to the early publication ventures of the department. The volumes published in the series entitled Calendar of Persian Correspondence now number seven and cover the years 1759-1787. The eighth volume is ready for publication and the whole series is expected to be completed in another ten years. Creditable as these ventures have been, the Government of India has for some time past been feeling the supreme urgency of adopting for the department an even more comprehensive and better planned program. Convinced, however, that success in such ambitious projects can be ensured only by enlisting the active collaboration of provincial governments, universities, Indian states, and learned societies in the work, the government as a preliminary step thoroughly reorganized the Indian Historical Records Commission, a body of experts which has since 1919 been co-operating with the government in an advisory capacity. Under the new constitution the provincial and state governments, the universities, and other learned bodies have become entitled to nominate their representatives on the commission as well as its newly created adjunct, the Research and Publication Committee, upon which has devolved the task of organizing the academic activities of the commission. One result of this democratization of the commission has been that the provinces and the states as

well as the universities and the learned institutions are now taking a keen interest in its activities.

The reconstituted commission has drawn up a five-year publication program for the Imperial Record Department which consists of three distinct parts: (1) the printing in extenso of all correspondence between the Fort William authorities in Bengal and the East India House for the period 1748-1800; (2) the publication of the Indian portions of Thevenot's and Carreri's travels, of the correspondence of James Browne with Warren Hastings, 1782-1785, and the minutes of Sir John Shore; and lastly (3) the printing of all records in Oriental languages. The keeper of the records of the Government of India, who is the general editor of all the series, has been entrusted with the editing of the volumes of the second group, while the Fort William and India House correspondence are being edited by eminent scholars representing the various learned bodies who have become institutional members of the commission. The records in Oriental languages are being published through private agencies, although the Imperial Record Department is rendering all possible assistance in the work. The first volume of the series, containing 170 Bengali letters, has been edited by the keeper of records, and the Calcutta University is bearing the cost of its publication. The Hindi letters have been taken up by the Allahabad University, the Persian newsletters by the University of Delhi, and the Marathi letters by the Bharat Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala of Poona, while the selection of letters in other languages is in good progress. The Indian Historical Records Commission is also endeavoring to persuade the provincial and state record offices to accept similar publication programs.

VIII. *Services to the Cause of Archives*

The department has since its inception been aware of the need of safeguarding from decay the raw materials of India's history, whether in its own custody or that of other bodies, official or non-official. The recommendations which it has made from time to time in this respect to the provincial and state governments bear eloquent testimony to the acute interest it has been taking in the problem. It is no wonder that the sister record offices in India, many of which owe their present organization to such recommendations, have always looked up to it for inspiration and guidance. In this great mission of salvaging the

treasures of the past, the Imperial Record Department has been actively co-operating with the Indian Historical Records Commission. The latter body, after its reconstitution, has mapped out a general scheme of regional surveys for rescuing manuscripts in private custody from the inevitable consequences of neglect and oblivion. Although the provinces have not been able to do much in this respect owing to the conditions brought about by the war, no less than twenty-one states have readily responded to the invitation to participate in this great scheme. The record department has given the lead by taking over nearly nine thousand volumes of military records from the Bombay government and three hundred bundles of the North West Frontier Province records, as the original custodians were unable to provide for their proper care.

This note would be incomplete unless a reference is made to the department's activities in disseminating the knowledge which long experience has enabled it to acquire in the technical matters relating to archives keeping and scientific treatment of records. Indeed, from the very first, it has been its avowed policy to share this knowledge with not only the sister record offices but also all institutions interested in documents. It has sought to achieve the object in the following ways: (1) by publishing from time to time a number of pamphlets on archival theory and practice and scientific methods of repair of documents; (2) by freely supplying information on these vital topics to such offices and institutions as have actually applied for them; (3) by sending out trained hands to offices soliciting their guidance and assistance in repairing their own records; and (4) by training men deputed by provincial and state record offices in scientific methods of repair and preservation. It is not possible to note the names of all who readily took advantage of the unique facilities thus offered. The most prominent name that may be recalled in this connection is that of the Madras Record Office, which not only sent its men for training in the scientific method of repair of records, but also on various occasions sought and obtained from the premier record office instructions on technical questions. Among other names may be mentioned those of the Punjab Record Office, the State Record Office of Baroda, the Assam government, Dafter-i-Diwani, Mal-o-Mulki, Hyderabad, the Central Provinces government, the Gwalior, Jodhpur, and the Alwar Durbars, the Archaeological Survey of India, Eastern Circle, the Bombay Secretariat

Library, to mention only a few. It has been a matter of no small satisfaction to the department that it has been able to render so much help to these institutions.

In view of the present lack of trained archivists in India, the department set up in 1942 a regular training scheme with a definitive syllabus of studies under which provision has been made for instructing candidates deputed by provincial and state governments as well as learned institutions in the theory and practice of archival organization and preservation of records. The candidate completing the full two years' course of prescribed studies under the scheme is awarded a diploma. This new measure has met with a very wide response among Indian archivists. Among those who have availed themselves of the facilities offered under the scheme may be mentioned the Orissa government, Hyderabad, Baroda, Cochin, Sirmur, and Tehri-Garhwal states, the Commercial College (Delhi), the Deccan College (Poona), and the universities of Bombay and Calcutta.

The Imperial Record Department has thus done a great deal to arouse public interest in historical documents. But it is fully conscious that much more remains to be done. To all who are interested in this mission of preserving the country's past, it has offered its free and full co-operation. It is on this "will to service" that the title of its existence remains secure.

S. N. Sen

Imperial Record Department, India

THE DISPOSAL OF USELESS STATE ARCHIVES[1]

WHEN that new and rare species of homo sapiens, the archivist, first made his appearance in "the land of the free and the home of the brave," his initial interest and concern were to prevent the wanton or careless destruction of valuable records which he saw going on all around him. Even today far too many useful archives are being destroyed, even in the best regulated areas, while in the less progressive regions in this field the prime need still is to preserve, to save valuable materials from total loss. Until this problem has been met, the archivist is not in a position to go any further.

In some areas, however, archival science has now made such progress that wanton destruction has been largely stopped. Where this has been accomplished the archivist has won his first important victory and is ready to proceed to something else. He immediately finds himself face to face with a whole flock of problems, one of the most important of which involves the disposal of the masses of useless records which are constantly piling up in public offices. It is all very well to say "preserve the valuable records," but who is to decide what is valuable and what is not? And after an effort has been made to answer that question, what procedures are to be followed in disposing of the records which appear to have no value? In trying to solve these problems, admittedly we may make mistakes, since at present our knowledge and experience in the field are inadequate. It would seem to be our duty, nevertheless, to face the problem and reach the best solution possible. If we fail to do so, the whole matter will simply go by default and a large portion of our valuable records will continue to be lost. The piling up of masses of archives and the need for removing the noncurrent ones from their offices of origin are like the current of a stream which cannot be held back indefinitely. If we do not provide a spillway by means of a regular, legalized procedure for handling such records, the flood will break the dam, sweeping away the good and bad alike.

This is a matter of concern today at all levels of government in our country, from the mayor of a small city or the register of deeds of one of our counties to the president of the United States. In this

[1] A paper read by Christopher Crittenden at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Princeton, New Jersey, November 16, 1943.

respect municipalities, counties, states, and the federal government are all in the same boat. You have just heard a significant paper on the new federal act on this subject,[2] and later you are to hear a discussion of the problem as it affects one particular agency of the federal government.[3] At some future meeting you will perhaps hear a presentation of the matter as it concerns municipal and county government units. The present study is limited to a discussion of what the various states are doing—or are not doing—in the field.

A survey of the laws passed by the different American states (or the lack of such laws) reveals a wide diversity from those states which have no legislation whatsoever at one extreme to those which have satisfactory laws at the other. Let's begin with those which have no laws. Twenty-one states, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia as yet appear to have taken no action in this field, so that there is no legalized procedure whatsoever by which officials in those states may dispose of useless records. Since at the same time some of these states have laws prohibiting the destruction of public archives, there is no legal way by which their useless records may be disposed of. Apparently they are supposed to accumulate until every available bit of space is occupied, and then to keep on accumulating. Of course, human nature being what it is, we may be sure that the law is not always obeyed and that quantities of noncurrent records are disposed of in one way or another.

Three states, Missouri, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin, have no general law on this subject but have special laws authorizing certain custodians of records to dispose of specially enumerated series, usually at the end of specified periods of time. In Wisconsin, for instance, the secretary of state, personnel board, industrial commission, board of health, commissioner of insurance, and supreme court are empowered to dispose of certain records after a stated interval in each case, usually either five or ten years. While this plan is better than no plan at all, it is weak in that no competent authority passes on the question of whether the records to be disposed of have historical

[2] "The Federal Disposal Act of July 7, 1943," by Marcus W. Price.

[3] "Regulations Governing the Preservation and Destruction of Records of Persons Subject to Parts I, III, and IV of the Interstate Commerce Act," by C. D. Crandall.

value, with the result that there is danger of the destruction of useful materials. In Wisconsin, as a matter of fact, the law specifically authorizes the disposal of petitions for new party tickets, petitions and memorials to either house of the legislature, certain copies of legislative committee hearings and minutes of committees, and other items which probably would not be authorized for disposal by competent archivists or historians.[4]

Three states, California, Connecticut, and Nevada, permit disposal by the department or official concerned, with the approval of some body or agency other than, and not including, the state archival agency. The California law authorizes the disposal of useless records by the head of any state agency with the approval of the department of finance. Connecticut permits the head of any state agency, with the permission of the attorney general, the comptroller, and the treasurer, to destroy any records more than six years old. In Nevada useless records may be destroyed by the state board of control upon the request of "any state board or officer."[5] Although such a system seems better than the one mentioned above, its obvious weakness is that no agency or person competent to pass upon the historical value of the records is brought into the picture.

The majority of states having legislation on the subject provide for disposal by the custodian of the records or head of the department with the approval of the state archival agency, state historian, or some other competent person or agency, and also with the approval of the council of state, board of control, or legislature, or else upon authorization of a records commission of which the state archivist or state historian is a member. The sixteen states using such a system in one form or another are Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.

[4] *Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri*, 1939, Sec. 5108 (p. 1207); Sec. 13041 (p. 3411). New Hampshire, *Revised Laws*, 1942, Ch. 22, Sec. 5 (p. 83); Ch. 115, Sec. 8 (p. 439); Ch. 147, Sec. 9 (p. 602). *Wisconsin Statutes*, 1943, Ch. 14, Sec. 28 (p. 181); Ch. 16, Sec. .05 (p. 209); Ch. 18, Sec. .03 (p. 247); Ch. 44, Sec. .08 (p. 640); Ch. 59, Sec. 23 (p. 804); Ch. 101, Sec. .32 (p. 1612); Ch. 140, Sec. .04 (p. 1910); Ch. 200, Sec. .16 (p. 2280); Ch. 251, Sec. .15 (p. 2621).

[5] *California Codes, General Laws and Constitution*, 1939 Supplement, Sec. 683 (p. 192). Connecticut, *Cumulative Supplement to the General Statutes*, 1933, Ch. 10, Sec. 40c (p. 13). *Nevada Compiled Laws*, Supplement, 1931-1941, Secs. 7278.11, 7278.12 (pp. 1052-1053).

To give a few examples, in Colorado any custodian of public records, in consultation with the curator of history of the State Historical Society and the attorney general, may dispose of any records which the three agree have "no legal, administrative, or historical value." In Illinois a state records commission, consisting of the state archivist, state historian, and state librarian, together with the department head and division head making the request, may recommend the disposal of records to the legislature, and action may be taken after the necessary legislation has been passed. In Massachusetts the state librarian or a deputy, an assistant attorney general, and the head of the agency with records to dispose of are authorized to take action. In Virginia joint action is required by the head of the department, state librarian, and state comptroller.[6] Such a system seems better than any of those yet mentioned in that it provides for clearing with an agency or person competent to pass on the historical value of the records, but it also appears to have defects. When a department makes a request of this kind, it usually is in no position to wait until the next session of the legislature or until some board meets at an uncertain date in the future. The very fact that the request is made is usually proof that the space occupied by the records is needed immediately, and if we cannot meet the request promptly we are likely to incur ill will or perhaps absolute refusal to follow the regular procedure. Another weakness would seem to be that a board consisting in whole or in part of persons already busy with other duties cannot possibly give detailed attention to this matter, and the same criticism would seem to apply to a legislature or legislative committee.

Finally there are six states, Arizona, Delaware, Michigan, Minne-

[6] *Session Laws of Colorado*, 1943, Ch. 151, Secs. 1-12 (pp. 473-475). Kansas, *Session Laws*, 1939, Ch. 307, Secs. 1-6 (pp. 582-583). Illinois, *Laws*, 1943, pp. 1055-1057; *Revised Statutes*, 1943, Ch. 116, Secs. 39-43 (p. 2616). Indiana, *Acts*, 1935, Ch. 219 (pp. 1035-1037). Maine, *Revised Statutes*, 1930, Ch. 29, Sec. 121 (p. 598); *Laws of Maine*, 1943, Ch. 9 (p. 102). *Annotated Code of Maryland*, 1939, Art. 41, Sec. 127 (p. 1750); Art. 41, Sec. 127A (p. 355, 1943 ed.). Massachusetts, *Acts*, 1941, Ch. 450 (pp. 525-526). *Revised Codes of Montana*, 1935, Ch. 52, Secs. 455.1, 455.4 (p. 483). *Public Laws of North Carolina*, 1939, Ch. 249 (pp. 512-513). *Session Laws of Oklahoma*, 1939, Ch. 24, Art. 21 (pp. 111-112). Oregon, *Laws*, 1943, Ch. 317 (pp. 425-426). *Laws of Pennsylvania*, 1937, No. 373, Art. 28, Sec. 524 (p. 1936). Vermont, *Acts and Resolves*, 1937, No. 229, Secs. 1-3 (pp. 279-280); *ibid.*, 1939, No. 245, Secs. 1-2 (p. 288); *ibid.*, 1943, No. 166, Secs. 1-2 (pp. 196-197). Virginia, *Acts*, 1940, Ch. 216, Secs. 353-354 (pp. 342-343); Ch. 239 (p. 392). *Laws of Washington*, 1941, Ch. 109, Secs. 1-7 (pp. 282-283). Wyoming, *Session Laws*, 1943, Ch. 106 (pp. 124-126).

sota, New Jersey, and New York, which permit disposal merely upon the approval of the state archival agency. The Delaware law, for example, simply provides that no official may dispose of public records without the consent of the public archives commission, and in New York the consent of the commissioner of education must be obtained.[7] Such a law has a number of advantages. First, the responsibility is placed where it ought to rest, namely with the two agencies directly concerned. The department where the records originate or the custodian of the records passes on their administrative value while the archival agency passes on their historical value. There is no buck passing. Second, there need be no long delay. It is unnecessary to wait for a meeting of a board or a legislature, but instead quick action can be taken and the archival agency can thus build up good will by prompt and efficient action. Third, such a law is broad and flexible and properly does not attempt to prescribe detailed procedures. The latter should be worked out by the archival agency, which, as it gains in knowledge and experience, will probably wish to change and improve them from time to time. Legislative action should not be required every time such a change is made.

Several states, including Virginia, New Jersey, Delaware, and Illinois, authorize the disposal of records which have been photographically reproduced. The Delaware act, for instance, provides that when any state agency "shall have photographed, photocopied, or microphotocopied" its records on a quality of film of a standard approved by the public archives commission, "and when such photographs, photocopies, or microphotographs shall be placed in adequately accessible containers and provision made for preserving, examining, and using the same, the head of such agency," with the approval of the state archivist, may dispose of the original records.[8] Such a law is helpful in that it encourages photographic reproduction of records and authorizes the fixing of standards for this purpose by the state archival agency, but it would appear to be hardly necessary

[7] Arizona, *Session Laws*, 1937, Ch. 32, Secs. 4-5 (pp. 87-88). *Laws of Delaware*, 1937, Ch. 92 (pp. 219-220); 1943, Ch. 74 (p. 301). Michigan, *Public and Local Acts*, 1943, Act No. 172, 8118 [15.1805], pp. 234-235. *Laws of Minnesota*, 1941, Ch. 553, Secs. 5-6 (pp. 1175-1176). New Jersey, *Laws*, 1941, Ch. 77 (pp. 184-186). *Laws of New York*, 1913, Ch. 424, Sec. 1192 (pp. 890-891); Secs. 1196-1197 (p. 892).

[8] *Laws of Delaware*, 1943, Ch. 74 (p. 301). *Laws of Illinois*, 1943, p. 1057, Sec. 4. *Laws of New Jersey*, 1941, Ch. 39 (pp. 111-112). *Virginia Code of 1942*, Ch. 23A, Sec. 355 (p. 97); *Acts of Assembly*, 1940, Ch. 216, Sec. 355 (pp. 343-344).

so far as disposal is concerned, since a well drafted act in the latter field provides sufficient authority for this purpose.

In the preceding discussion we have indicated which type of law is best in our own judgment. We believe that a simple act, permitting disposal of useless records by the department of origin or by the custodian, with the approval of the archival agency, is best suited for the purpose. In reaching this conclusion, we have formed the opinion that the law of our own state is not ideal and needs to be amended.

In order to complete the picture, a discussion of procedures is necessary. As we all know, one law may be enforced while another may not, or a good law may be poorly enforced while a poor one may be strictly enforced. We need to go behind the law to see what actually happens.

In general, in those states where there are efficient, active archival agencies the problem receives a good deal of attention while in the states where such an agency is lacking the law is not well enforced. In one case, for example, where the law is said to be adequate, the state historian reports that very little has been accomplished. Among the leading states in the field today are Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington.

Probably the best procedures are simple. The department desiring authorization to dispose of records may be required to make the request to the archival agency in writing, describing the records as to bulk, inclusive dates, and the like, stating that they are no longer needed in the conduct of current business, and submitting a sample of each series. The archival agency may then refer the request to its records inspector, who will go into the problem from various angles. The inspector should be a person of pleasing personality and tact, for by his contacts with other agencies he can either make friends and influence people in favor of the archival agency, or he can make enemies and stir up bad feeling.

After the records inspector has made his investigation he will report to the head of the archival agency, recommending certain action. The head may wish to make further study and in the end he may disagree with part or even all of the recommendation. If he agrees that the records may properly be disposed of, he can approve the request and authorize the department concerned to make suit-

able disposal. If, however, he believes that some or all the records may have historical value, he may request that part or all of them be transferred to the archival agency. Usually the requesting department cares not at all what happens to the records just so they are removed to provide needed space. Thus ordinarily there will be no objection if they are transferred to the archival agency rather than disposed of.

Sometimes a question arises regarding confidential archives which appear to have historical value. The department of origin will probably feel that they should be destroyed while the archival agency will want them preserved. In such a case a compromise agreement may sometimes be reached whereby the records are preserved but are sealed for a period of years.

In a number of states schedules for the disposal of valueless archives are being worked out. As has been indicated above, sometimes schedules are provided by law, but it seems better for them to be prepared by the archival agency, in co-operation with the various departments concerned. In that way different series at stated ages can be disposed of without seeking further authorization, thus avoiding the waste of a great deal of time and effort. New York is a leader in this field and the supervisor of public records in that state has made some interesting experiments. The new Illinois law, which is similar to the federal law, provides that once the legislature has authorized the disposal of certain records, the state records commission may thereafter authorize the disposal of similar records even if the legislature is not in session. In preparing schedules for disposal we have barely scratched the surface, and there is yet a great deal to be done. Once an efficient system has been evolved, many of the disposal problems we now face may be expected to grow less difficult or even to disappear altogether.

Perhaps it will not be out of order to describe briefly how we are handling the disposal problem in North Carolina. In 1939 we prevailed upon the legislature to pass a bill authorizing destruction or other disposal of useless records upon recommendation of the custodian, upon further recommendation of the department of archives and history, upon authorization of the council of state, a body consisting of the governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor, and superintendent of public instruction. Soon after the bill had been passed we sent a copy to the head of every state agency, offering

our co-operation in enforcing the law. Thereafter a few requests for disposal were received from time to time, but it was not until 1943 that things really began to move. Early in the summer of that year the governor, at our request, wrote to the head of each state agency and institution requesting that he designate some member of his staff as records administrator, to handle the agency's records problems in co-operation with the department of archives and history. In most cases the desired action was taken, and a few weeks later we called in our own offices a meeting of the records administrators. The governor attended and made a talk about the importance of the program, after which Dr. R. D. W. Connor, chairman of the department, and several members of the staff explained that we proposed to be of assistance to all other state agencies by (1) preserving valuable noncurrent records, (2) disposing of useless noncurrent records, and (3) meeting current records problems. We likewise explained the procedure to be followed, along the lines recommended above except that our department could not authorize disposal but could merely recommend such action to the council of state. The meeting was attended by more than fifty records administrators, many of them from out of town, and they appeared to be interested and co-operative.

Since the meeting we have been receiving an increasing number of requests for the disposal of records. Sometimes these are made orally, sometimes in writing. In the latter case the letters give a statement as to the dates covered by the various series, the bulk, and other similar matters, and enclose samples of the items which are up for disposal. All such requests are referred to our records inspector, who investigates with the co-operation of the records administrator of the department concerned and reports to the head of our own department. Recommendations for disposal, based upon the inspector's reports, are made to the council of state, which so far has followed our recommendations in every instance. The only difficulty is that the council of state is frequently slow to act, and we will probably seek to have the law amended at the next session of the legislature, providing for disposal by any custodian of state records merely with the approval of the department of archives and history.

We feel that our system is working well, and we are particularly pleased with the willingness to co-operate shown by other state agencies and the good will which we are building up. When the law

has been amended, we feel that we will be in a position to render even better service.

This entire problem is one of importance in winning and maintaining good will for an archival organization. While the archivist is primarily concerned with preserving valuable materials, most other government agencies are mainly interested in getting rid of archives they no longer need. By helping them solve their problems in this latter field we can render them a real service, one which will produce results in good will and perhaps in increased appropriations. No competent archivist can afford to neglect the opportunity thus offered.

The problem of how to dispose of useless state archives—a new field—is one which calls for further thought and effort. We may be confident that, as we continue our work, we will gain a better understanding of the principles involved and evolve more efficient techniques and procedures for the disposal of the vast quantities of worthless records which are now overflowing the offices and storage boxes of every state of the Union.

Christopher Crittenden
Nell Hines

North Carolina State Department of Archives and History

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIELD RECORDS PROGRAM OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT

SINCE the Office of Records Administration was established in the Administrative Office of the Navy Department in October, 1941, it has had Navy-wide responsibility for noncurrent records, but, because of the size of the task and the limited personnel available, it has placed primary emphasis on noncurrent records in the Navy Department in Washington. Through March 31, 1944, the Office of Records Administration had caused the transfer of 33,000 cubic feet of records to the National Archives, disposed of with Congressional authorization of at least 100,000 cubic feet of useless records,[1] and transferred to naval records depositories 87,000 cubic feet of records either too active to be transferred to the National Archives or too recent in date to permit their immediate disposal.

As a result of these operations, all permanently valuable records of the Navy Department through 1940, with the exception of certain personnel records and a few relatively small groups of other records, are in the National Archives, and all the rest of the departmental records through that date have been disposed of, leaving the files of the department in what the Navy would call "strip ship" condition. To take care of the records still in the department and those to be created in the future, the office has concentrated on developing schedules for the orderly retirement of departmental records under the authority of Public Law 115 of the Seventy-eighth Congress. Such schedules have been approved by Congress for seven of the eleven major bureaus and offices of the department, and work on schedules for three of the four remaining bureaus is far advanced.

With the noncurrent records of the department proper thus under control, the Office of Records Administration has since January 1, 1944, placed emphasis increasingly on a records retirement program for the shore establishment and the fleet. Some work had been done previously with field records, but this had been limited largely to transmitting disposal lists to Congress, preparing disposal schedules for the records of several types of field offices closely related to bureaus and offices in Washington, and receiving in naval records

[1] The total quantity of records destroyed is considerably larger than the figure given, which includes only those officially reported; many more records have been disposed of in accordance with law, but because no reports are required the quantities are not readily ascertainable.

depositories records shipped in by a few decommissioned or overcrowded "activities," a comprehensive term used by the Navy to include offices and ships of all sizes. Otherwise the field records of the Navy, estimated to occupy 800,000 square feet of space, were virgin territory.

It was decided to approach the field records problem in three ways: (1) by eliminating all records possible *in situ* through the visits of trained personnel to points where Navy records are concentrated; (2) by transferring records not susceptible of immediate disposal to naval records depositories where they can be processed to separate the valuable from the worthless; and (3) by developing broad cross-sectional schedules for the shore establishment and the fleet for the retirement of current and future records. All three approaches are now used simultaneously, but the first to be developed chronologically was that of transferring records to depositories for processing.

Naval Records Depository No. 1 was established in February, 1942. Designed primarily to serve the Navy Department, it is located in Washington in a three-floor building formerly used as an automobile salesroom and garage and has a capacity of 20,000 square feet. Since its establishment, this depository has received records occupying 45,000 square feet of space, mostly in the District of Columbia, and by processing has eliminated 25,000 square feet of them, a turnover of 125 per cent in two years. This processing involves performing as many of the following steps as necessary: (*a*) Inventory and arrangement; (*b*) Elimination of duplicate records; (*c*) Provision of reference service; (*d*) Determination in co-operation with cognizant offices of the fate of each record group; and (*e*) Prompt disposal of each record group in accordance with the determination in (*d*).

The advantages of processing are apparent from the fact that the first records so treated by Depository No. 1, dating from 1918 to 1938, had occupied some 20,000 square feet in a storage building. After processing, only 200 square feet of records or 1 percent were retained by the Navy. For want of processing earlier, 99 percent of the records had been retained from four to twenty-four years longer than necessary. In the fiscal year 1943, the depository received records releasing 25,000 square feet of office space and 3,300 filing cabinets, together valued at $150,000. The cost of operating the depository in 1943 was approximately $25,000.

Naval Records Depository No. 2, with 50,000 square feet of space, was established at Philadelphia in December, 1943, in an eight-floor structure previously used as an office building and earlier as an automobile salesroom and garage. At the outset, the principal function of this depository was to house permanent records of separated civilian and military personnel too active to be kept in the National Archives. In the first three months of its operation, this depository released 30,150 square feet of space in Washington—18,900 square feet in Navy buildings and the other 11,250 square feet in the National Archives—by the removal of personnel records. An additional 3,000 square feet of space are being released by the transfer of records of men mustered out since Pearl Harbor, and other transfers will be made regularly as men leave the service. Field personnel records, which partially duplicate Washington personnel records and exceed them in bulk, are also being sent to Philadelphia. Approximately 3,000 square feet of records of separated civilian and military personnel have been transferred from the Boston Navy Yard, and similar records from other shore activities will be accepted as rapidly as possible.

Processing personnel records presents many peculiar problems, most of which have yet to be studied and all of which have yet to be solved. Foremost among these is duplication of files, either in whole or in part. A typical individual in the field will have a personnel file in Washington, one in his naval district, one in the activity at which he is stationed, and often one or more in subordinate units of this activity. If the individual moves from one activity or district to another, the number of separate files increases accordingly. A high degree of duplication exists among these files, but no simple formula has been found for eliminating this duplication and effecting a compact, unique file. Even within an individual's file at a single activity there is often duplication of certain types of documents which should be eliminated by weeding. Finally, after a file is closed and has been weeded and placed in definitive form, whether it should be retained permanently in that form or destroyed after microfilming is worthy of serious consideration. The coming months should witness the solution of some of these problems and a corresponding reduction in the bulk of inactive personnel records stored at Philadelphia.

Although it was established primarily for personnel records, the Philadelphia depository soon found that it was called upon to accept records of three other major types, namely, noncurrent records of

permanent shore activities, records of decommissioned activities, and ship files. Arrangements were therefore made to use the small amount of remaining space available in the building for receiving and processing records of these types sent in from various naval activities along the Atlantic Coast. The response of naval activities was immediate and impressive. In a few weeks the depository received ship files occupying 5,240 square feet of space from the New York Navy Yard, the Boston Navy Yard, the New London Submarine Base, and the Key West Naval Operating Base. It also received inactive records occupying 5,520 square feet from the Philadelphia Navy Yard and thereby released 980 filing cabinets. The value of the space and equipment released was $37,231. These savings will increase as the records are processed and disposed of.

On the basis of the accomplishments of Naval Records Depositories Nos. 1 and 2, and in view of the vast quantities of records known to exist at naval activities, the establishment of three additional depositories for the processing of records was authorized. In lieu of one of these depositories, a former garage building containing 30,000 square feet of space was obtained in Philadelphia to serve as an annex to Depository No. 2. Naval Records Depository No. 3, a small structure in the Middle West, was built for the security storage of microfilm copies of vital naval documents. Since the film stored there is from Washington rather than the field, this depository will not be discussed further here. For Depository No. 4, space was found in a thirteen-floor parking garage in Los Angeles. Five floors containing a total of 60,000 square feet of space were obtained initially, with provision for the acquisition of additional floors as needed. Both Depository No. 4 and the annex to Depository No. 2 began operations on July 1, 1944. The site for Depository No. 5 and the time of its establishment have yet to be determined.

Although the naval records depositories deal exclusively with noncurrent records, the records are far from inactive. Depository No. 1, serving the department in Washington, receives 6,500 service requests a year, or 30 per working day. At Philadelphia, where the personnel files are exceedingly active, the requests are received at the rate of 83,000 a year, or 265 a day. This heavy reference service work, coupled with the extensive processing already mentioned, obviously removes the depositories far from the category of warehouses for the dead storage of old files.

One final word should be said about the naval records depositories.

Their personnel is selected with considerable care, since the normal complement for each consists of only nine persons, namely, an officer in charge, an assistant officer in charge, a stenographer, two file clerks, one of whom is usually an enlisted man, a truck driver, and three laborers. A larger staff is required, of course, to service the personnel files in Philadelphia. Thus far the professional personnel for the depositories includes Lt. (jg) Everett O. Alldredge, who, under the director of records administration, is officer in charge of all naval records depositories as well as officer in charge of Naval Records Depository No. 2 in Philadelphia; Lt. Paul L. Bishop, who until re-recently has been serving on loan as records officer for the Bureau of Yards and Docks; Lt. (jg) Lewis Darter, who has recently been commissioned in the United States Naval Reserve; Chief Specialist Herbert Randall, officer in charge of Naval Records Depository No. 1 in Washington; and Yeoman, Second Class, Albert Whimpey, assigned to the depository in Washington, and Gordon Williams, assigned to the depository at Philadelphia. Like Lt. Comdr. Emmett J. Leahy, director of records administration, and other key members of his staff concerned with noncurrent records, all these men before joining the United States Naval Reserve were members of the staff of the National Archives.

The second phase of the Navy's program for field records consists of an intensive program for the speedy elimination of large backlogs of noncurrent records which have accumulated over the years at the major naval establishments throughout the country. The retirement of these records is effected by members of the staff of the Office of Records Administration sent out from Washington, usually in teams of two. Although these teams are concerned primarily with noncurrent records, they are qualified as a rule to advise on current records and microphotographic problems, which are often closely related to the retirement of noncurrent records. In the two weeks that are normally required at each major naval activity, the teams check to see that records already authorized by Congress for disposal have been eliminated, and if they have not, disposal is effected; they prepare disposal lists for Congressional approval for obsolete records not previously authorized for disposal; they draw up disposal schedules to cover present and future accumulations of records; they arrange for the transfer of records to naval records depositories when the records are in need of processing before dis-

posal or when they are no longer needed at the activity but must be preserved for a fixed period of time; and they perform a multitude of other chores and services needed to make the activity's files shipshape. These teams have been highly effective in providing immediate relief to crowded naval activities. They have also stirred up considerable business for the depositories. For example, nearly all the records transferred to the Philadelphia depository thus far, exclusive of personnel records, have been sent in by teams operating in navy yards and other naval activities at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk, and Charleston. Immediately after the opening of Depository No. 4 on the West Coast, teams will be dispatched to Pearl Harbor, Puget Sound, Mare Island, Los Angeles, San Diego, and other nearby points to eliminate backlogs at those points. By the end of July it is expected that most of this West Coast backlog will be assembled for processing in the Los Angeles depository.

In the course of "blitzing" these backlogs of record, and also as a part of the processing of records sent to the depositories, additional schedules will be developed for the retirement of records of the naval shore establishment and the fleet as the third phase of the Navy's field records program. Since naval activities number in the thousands and types of naval activities may be counted by the hundreds, it has been determined to work out schedules for types of activities, beginning with those that are largest or most numerous. Schedules have already been approved by Congress for supply, accounting, and disbursing offices, which probably cover in bulk at least half the field records of the Navy. Other schedules are pending in Congress or the National Archives for records of inspectors of naval material, labor boards, and disbanded activities of the Marine Corps in noncombat zones, and a comprehensive schedule for all vessels of the United States fleet is in preparation. Schedules less broad in scope have been prepared or authorized for bulky individual items or files, such as general correspondence in ship files and navy yard files on ship repair and maintenance, pending the completion of more comprehensive schedules. A few schedules for specific large or important activities have also been prepared, among them the Naval Air Material Center, the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the Marine Corps Depot of Supplies, and the United States Naval Academy. The war will be over before schedules are completed for all naval activities, or at least so it is hoped, but if the expected progress is

made in scheduling the records of large and numerous activities, only the smaller activities will remain untouched when demobilization begins.

The field records program of the Navy, despite the progress already made, is still in a fluid, developmental stage. At present, however, it seems as if it will center increasingly around the naval records depositories. Besides processing the old records of the permanent shore establishment and such specialized types of records as the personnel files, the depositories are processing ship files that have been put ashore and records of decommissioned activities. It may be that in time all records of decommissioned activities not immediately disposable under a schedule will be sent automatically to a depository for processing. The functions of the depositories may expand in still another direction. It may be that they can eventually perform for the areas in which they are located all the services now rendered to the Navy Department in Washington by the Office of Records Administration—correspondence management, current records management, noncurrent records management, administrative reference service and the controlled issuance of directives, and microphotographic service. If that should happen, the depositories will become regional offices of records administration for the Navy, merely guided and coordinated by the headquarters office in Washington.

Lt. Herbert E. Angel, USNR

Navy Department

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECORDS DISPOSAL POLICY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO 1934

THE acts of Congress of 1789 creating the executive departments of the federal government provided for the keeping of records pertaining to their functions. The secretaries of most of the departments were authorized to appoint principal clerks, whose duty it became to maintain records of the departments.[1]

Little legislation pertaining to the disposal of records was enacted by Congress during the first hundred years though numerous laws relating to records were passed. By the act of March 27, 1804, the public records of one state or territory, when properly authenticated, were to have full force and effect in any other state or territory. A penalty for the willful destruction of records or the attempt to destroy them was provided for by "An act to prevent frauds upon the Treasury of the United States," approved February 26, 1853, which resulted from the detection of frauds in California land claims cases. The falsely making, altering, forging, or counterfeiting of public records for the purpose of defrauding the government was made a felony by the act of April 5, 1866.

Since there was no statute providing for the destruction of valueless papers, both these and the valuable ones were uniformly preserved. By 1810 the garret in the public building west of the president's house was filled with public records. The House committee appointed to inquire into the state of the ancient records and archives of the United States found them to be in a "situation neither safe nor convenient, nor honorable to the nation."[2] The recommendation of this committee resulted in the passage of the act of April 28, 1810, which provided for the removal of all offices except those of the Departments of State, War, and Navy from the public building and

[1] The attorney general, however, was not provided with official quarters or clerical assistance until 1818, consequently such records of his office as had been kept for the years prior to that time disappeared.

[2] *Report of the Committee, Appointed to Inquire into the State of the Ancient Public Records and Archives of the United States.* March 27, 1810 (Washington, 1810). This House committee was formed on the motion of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts; its members were Josiah Quincy, Archibald Van Horne of Maryland, and Jacob Swoope of Virginia.

the construction therein of fireproof rooms for the convenient deposit of the records of those departments. Thereafter, for many years, Congress ceased to be concerned about the public records.

Not long after the Civil War the accumulation of noncurrent records in the executive departments began to force attention to the question of their disposition. In July, 1870, the Secretary of War appointed a board "to examine into and report upon the existing methods of keeping the records and transacting the current business of the War Department and its Bureaus."[3] This board reported as follows concerning the "vast and steady accumulation of records":

> The yearly accumulation of papers in the various public offices has engaged the attention of the board. Most of these papers possess no value whatever after the lapse of differing periods of time, while others are never likely, within reasonable probability, to prove of sufficient value to justify the care and expense of their preservation. Unsuccessful applications for office, mere letters of transmittal, the monthly personal reports of officers, changes of station or duty, applications for discharge of soldiers or remission of their court-martial sentences, and vast numbers of other papers will suggest themselves to the officers in charge of public records as falling within the view of the board.[4]

According to reports made by the offices of this department to its secretary in the latter part of that year, there were considerable quantities of old records on hand that could be disposed of.[5]

Similar conditions were pointed out by the other departments of the government. In their annual reports the secretaries called attention to the accumulation of files and made suggestions for alleviating conditions. In 1872 the Secretary of the Treasury stated that the increase of books and papers was so great as to interfere with the business of the department; the annual accrual of records was then requiring 7,688 cubic feet of storage space. Rooms that could be used for clerks' desks were filled with records, as were portions of the public halls. The secretary recommended the erection of a brick fireproof building on the public ground south of the Treasury for housing the records and for accommodating the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The Department of the Interior, then housed in the old

[3] *Report* [*of*] *the Select Committee of the United States Senate . . . to Inquire into and Examine the Methods of Business and Work in the Executive Departments, etc., and the Causes of Delays in Transacting the Public Business, etc.* (50 Cong., 1 Sess., *Senate Report* No. 507) (Washington, 1888). I, 240.

[4] *Ibid.*, I, 241.

[5] *Ibid.*, I, 250-253.

Patent Office building (now Civil Service Commission building), was also crowded with the records and asked for additional space. The Quartermaster General of the Army in 1875 recommended that Congress pass a law authorizing the destruction of worthless papers.[6] But the preponderant opinion was for the provision of more storage space for the records rather than for the legalization of their disposal.

The records problem was brought to a focus by the fire of September 24, 1877, which destroyed part of the Interior Department building. Three days later President Hayes appointed a commission consisting of Lt. Colonel Thomas L. Casey, Corps of Engineers, J. G. Hill, architect of the Treasury, and Edward Clark, architect of the Capitol Extension, to consider and report upon the condition of all the public buildings in Washington. This commission found that

> Generally the public buildings not of fireproof construction, and used for office purposes, are much endangered by the character of their contents. The files cases and boxes, books, papers, &c., belonging to the several departments of the government, have accumulated to such an extent as to crowd the spaces provided for them; and a fire fairly under way would be difficult to control.

On point five of the president's instructions for the conduct of the investigation, *i.e.*, "What provision, if any, should be made for the custody and safety of files not in constant use," the commission reported as follows:

> While in some of the departments there are files in constant use that date back to the earliest days of the government, there are in all the departments large numbers of papers no longer needed for constant reference that only add to the quantity of combustible material in the structures, and the consequent danger from fire. The number of papers is increasing rapidly, and in the consideration of the care and preservation of the files this commission has met with the suggestion that many of the papers could well be destroyed. After a careful examination of this question, we do not consider it advisable to recommend this course with any of the records, however unimportant they may appear. Every paper worthy at any time to be recorded and placed on the public files may be of value at some future time, either in a historical, biographical or pecuniary way, to the citizen or the nation. Papers seemingly of the least importance have been connected with the proof of false demands against the government, and it is scarcely possible to arrive at a decision of what is important to be preserved and what is useless to be destroyed. We therefore recommend, for the relief of the overcrowded buildings,

[6] U. S. War Department, *Annual Report*, 1875, 200.

> and in view of the rapid increase of the public records, that a fire-proof building of ample dimensions be constructed for the accommodation of the archives of the government no longer required for constant use. This structure should be built in the most approved and thoroughly fire-proof manner, with walls of brick, and so designed that additions can be made from time to time without imparing the general architectural features. Its location should be so remote from all other buildings as to place it beyond danger from exterior fires.[7]

The quartermaster general submitted a plan in the following year, which was published in the annual report of the Secretary of War, providing for a Hall of Records to be constructed at the cost of $200,000 near the new State, War, and Navy building for the storage of government records. When it was resubmitted in the next year, President Hayes gave it his support. Congress took up the matter, but it made no appropriation for a building; bills were presented in subsequent years with the same lack of success.

Failing to obtain relief in one direction, the departments sought it in another. If more buildings could not be obtained, something had to be done to reduce the crowded conditions in the existing buildings. In his annual report for 1879 the postmaster general called attention to the accumulation of records in his department which were occupying room urgently needed for other purposes. Not feeling authorized to order the destruction of these records, he recommended that Congress pass a law giving him the necessary authority. Accordingly the appropriation act of March 3, 1881, contained the following provision:

> That the Postmaster-General is hereby authorized to sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of, the files of papers which have accumulated, or may hereafter accumulate in the Post-Office Department that are not needed in the transaction of current business and have no permanent value or historical interest; and the proceeds of said sales he shall pay into the Treasury, and make report thereof to Congress.

This act apparently makes the first use of the phrase "permanent value or historical interest," which has plagued all records disposal work ever since. A similar provision in the appropriation act of August 5, 1882, authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to sell worthless papers of the auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office

[7] *Security of Public Buildings against Fire. . . . Report of the Commission appointed to Examine into the Security of the Public Buildings in the City of Washington against Fire.* December 10, 1877. (45 Cong., 2 Sess., *House Ex. Doc.* No. 10), 9.

Department. By an act approved two days later the clerk and doorkeeper of the House and the sergeant at arms of the Senate were directed to sell valueless documents under the direction of the committees on accounts of their respective houses.

The action of Congress in passing large-scale pension legislation beginning in 1879 had an unexpected reverberation. Constituents complained to Congressmen early in the 1880's that payment of their pensions was being delayed. The reason for this delay was discovered to be in the inadequacy of the records of the War Department, which was obliged to investigate each pension application and produce evidence of service and hospitalization.[8] Not even by adding new clerks and working its employees overtime could the Record and Pension Division of the Surgeon General's Office keep up with the flood of applications. The introduction of an index record card system by Capt. Fred C. Ainsworth, who was appointed chief of the Record and Pension Division in December, 1886, gradually eased this situation. But in the meantime it led to the formation on March 3, 1887, on the motion of Senator F. M. Cockrell of Missouri, of the Select Committee of the United States Senate to Inquire into and Examine the Methods of Business and Work in the Executive Departments, etc., and the Causes of Delays in Transacting the Public Business, etc.[9] This committee undertook an investigation into the organization and business methods of the departments which extended over several years.[10]

During the course of its work the committee learned of the existence of large masses of noncurrent records which had accumulated over a long period of years. In its opinion these records were not needed or useful in the transaction of current business and lacked permanent value or historical interest. Various offices of the War Department reported in 1887 having large quantities of records which could be destroyed.[11] The quartermaster general in 1887 had 575 boxes of records which had been stored in his office in Washington shipped to the Schuylkill Arsenal in Philadelphia for permanent

[8] Siert F. Riepma, "Portrait of an Adjutant General," *Journal of the American Military History Foundation*, II (Spring, 1938), 26-35.

[9] Gustavus A. Weber, *Organized Efforts for the Improvement of Methods of Administration in the United States* (New York, 1919), 57-58.

[10] Its report, referred to in note 3 was published in three volumes and contains much valuable data as to record keeping methods practiced by the executive departments at the time.

[11] *Methods of Business in the Executive Departments*, I, 241-250.

storage as he did not favor the destruction of any of the records of his office.[12] The register of the Treasury on the other hand recommended in the same year that measures be taken to destroy part of the records in his custody.

The result of the inquiry conducted by the Cockrell committee was the passage of the first general act for the destruction of worthless records of the federal government. The committee ascertained that there were only three laws, those passed in 1881 and 1882, previously referred to, relating to this subject. On March 8, 1888, Senator Cockrell on the instruction of the committee introduced a bill in the Senate to authorize and provide for the disposition of useless papers in the executive departments. The result was the act of February 16, 1889, entitled "An act to authorize and provide for the disposition of useless papers in the Executive Departments":

> *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That whenever there shall be in any one of the Executive Departments of the Government an accumulation of files of papers, which are not needed or useful in the transaction of the current business of such Department and have no permanent value or historical interest, it shall be the duty of the head of such Department to submit to Congress a report of that fact, accompanied by a concise statement of the condition and character of such papers. And upon the submission of such report, it shall be the duty of the presiding officer of the Senate to appoint two Senators, and of the Speaker of the House of Representatives to appoint two Representatives, and the Senators and Representatives so appointed shall constitute a joint committee, to which shall be referred such report, with the accompanying statement of the condition and character of such papers, and such joint committee shall meet and examine such report and statement and the papers therein described, and submit to the Senate and House, respectively, a report of such examination and their recommendation. And if they report that such files of papers, or any part thereof, are not needed or useful in the transaction of the current business of such Department, and have no permanent value or historical interest, then it shall be the duty of such head of the Department to sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of such files of papers upon the best obtainable terms after due publication of notice inviting proposals therefor, and receive and pay the proceeds thereof into the Treasury of the United States, and make report thereof to Congress.[13]

[12] Fifty years afterwards these records were found in the Schuylkill Arsenal by the Survey of Federal Archives and transferred to the National Archives. Portions of them have since been destroyed.

[13] 25 *U. S. Statutes at Large,* 672.

By a provision of the appropriation act of March 2, 1895, the foregoing law was amended "to include in its provisions any accumulation of files or papers of a like character therein described now or hereafter in the various public buildings under the control of the several Executive Departments of the Government." This amendment was apparently adopted in order to cover records of the departments in storage in buildings other than those occupied by the departments themselves. The act of 1889 remained the principal statute under which records were destroyed until the passage of the National Archives act of 1934.

After the passage of the disposition act the Treasury department took immediate steps to weed its accumulated files. Circular letters were sent out to officials in the department on February 19, and May 7, 1889, directing the preparation of detailed reports of the character and condition of records that could be disposed of. In the case of some of the subdivisions of this department, such as the Office of Internal Revenue and the Register's Office, the segregation of papers for disposal involved a considerable amount of labor. On January 29, 1890, however, a list was submitted to the Senate which comprised 118 printed pages. Some of the records in this list went back to the early years of the nineteenth century; others were as recent as one to four years prior to the date of the report. The quantity of records covered by the list was huge, amounting to about four hundred tons, which was sold for over $8,000. No other department made as wholehearted a response to the opportunity presented by the new law. Again in 1893 the Treasury department circularized its officials for another scheduling of valueless papers. Since that time this department has regularly presented lists to Congress. Despite its activity in disposing of worthless files, the department was obliged in 1898 and later years to rent buildings in which to store records having permanent value.

The War Department presented its first list on February 26, 1889, and in subsequent years it presented other lists at intervals of several years, except for the war years 1914-1921 when this work was suspended. This department, however, made no systematic efforts to purge its records of valueless papers. The depository at the Schuylkill Arsenal in Philadelphia continued to receive records from the Quartermaster Department, while another depository for Ordnance Department records was subsequently established at the Ordnance

Depot at Curtis Bay, Maryland. Huge volumes of the records of this department, without the previous weeding of worthless material, have been transferred to the National Archives, particularly since the beginning of the present national emergency. This task has been left for a time of greater leisure.

Other departments also disposed of their old files under the act of 1889. The first list of Post Office Department records was submitted to Congress in 1893. The quantity of records covered by this list was estimated at about 70 tons. Subsequent lists were infrequent until 1906 after which lists were presented about every year. The same practice was followed by the Department of the Interior after forwarding its first list in 1900. The Department of Commerce and Labor, which had been established in 1903, began presenting lists in 1906, and after 1908 these were made annually. A separate Department of Labor was created in 1913, and in the following year it began the regular presentation of lists of useless papers. Most of the records accumulated by the Department of State are of permanent character, so it has presented only a few lists, the first in 1921. After submitting an initial list in 1912, the Department of Justice presented five lists in 1939, sixteen in 1940, and thirty-two in 1941.

The procedure which was followed to secure authorization for the disposal of valueless papers under the act of 1889 was simple and underwent few important changes. Until 1902-1906, the lists were submitted to either the House or the Senate, which had them printed in a document. Pursuant to the act, a Joint Committee on the Disposition of Useless Papers in the Executive Departments was formed to consider the list. Until the late 1920's this committee was referred to as the Joint Select Committee (or Joint Committee) on the Disposition of Useless Papers in the Executive Departments, from then until 1934 as the Joint Committee on the Disposition of Useless Executive Papers, and after 1935 as the Joint Committee on the Disposition of Executive Papers. When the committee reached its decision, the authorization for the destruction of papers was published in a House Report, which was communicated to the agency. From the designation of the committee these reports came to be called "Useless Paper Reports." The House or Senate Report containing the authorization for the destruction of the records referred to the list previously published in a House or Senate Document or republished the list. Between 1906 and 1920 the lists were printed only

in House Documents or Reports. Since the latter date the communication from the department, the list, and the authorization have all been published in a single House Report.

Few of the lists are very useful, as they are generally limited to brief titles without dates and quantities. The years covered by the records have been included in some lists, but the quantities have usually been absent. For this reason it is impossible to determine from the lists the quantity of records destroyed for any department. The total quantity of records destroyed under the act of 1889 must have been enormous.

A significant modification was made in the foregoing procedure by Executive Order No. 1499 of March 16, 1912:

> It is hereby ordered that before reporting to Congress useless files of papers to be disposed of under the provision of the Act of February 16, 1889, as extended and amended by Section 1, Chapter 189, of the Act of March 2, 1895, lists of such papers shall be submitted to the Librarian of Congress in order that the several Executive Departments may have the benefit of his views as to the wisdom of preserving such of the papers as he may deem to be of historical interest.

Thereafter the printed lists of records were usually accompanied by a statement from the Librarian of Congress to the effect that the list had been examined by the chief of the Division of Manuscripts. After this the disposition of useless papers was somewhat less perfunctory, for if the Division of Manuscripts had any doubts as to the advisability of destroying any items listed it would take up the matter with the clerk of the joint committee and study samples. This review was limited to records that might have possible historical value. The lists were so brief that they were poor instruments to work with. The review of the lists was continued after the passage of the National Archives act through July, 1935, by which time the National Archives had its machinery set up for handling the lists.

Although the Department of Agriculture had been established in 1862, it made no use of the act of 1889 for disposing of its obsolete files. This department secured the passage of a special act on March 4, 1907, by which the Secretary of Agriculture was "authorized to sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of the accumulation of Department files which do not constitute permanent records, and all other documents and publications which have become obsolete or worthless." Under this act the whole procedure of disposing of its

useless papers was handled by this department itself, requests for permission to destroy records being submitted to and approved by the secretary. The power conferred by this statute appears to have been used without proper discrimination at times, for it has been estimated that over half of the records of the Department of Agriculture, both valuable and worthless, for the period from 1862 to 1889 have been destroyed.[14] This unusually high rate of destruction probably resulted from the desire of the custodians to rid themselves of the annoyance caused by historians desiring to use the records and from a lack of appreciation of the value of the records. In 1936 the Department of Agriculture began submitting lists of useless papers to the National Archives pursuant to the act of 1934.

The Department of the Navy disposed of its old records under the act of February 16, 1889, and several special acts. The Secretary of the Navy reported in 1900 that the available garret and basement space in the department was about exhausted. The accumulation of files also forced the construction of shelving against the walls of rooms and the utilization of the middle floor space of some offices. The first list to be submitted under the general act was not sent to the House, however, until February 16, 1915. This was not an extensive list, although it included some records as old as 1849. The lists compiled by this department were passed upon by the Office of Naval Records and Library, which was the archives and historical unit of the department, as well as by the Library of Congress. Only one list was submitted by this department during the period 1917 to 1921, but after the latter year lists were reported annually. Inasmuch as there were several shore establishments located in or near Washington in which accumulations of old records could be conveniently deposited there was not the necessity for cleaning out the noncurrent files that existed in some other departments. For this reason the Department of the Navy was slow about undertaking the problem of disposing of its old records, and only gradual progress was made.

Although several special acts were passed by Congress relating to disposition of records by the Department of the Navy, no enactment was made giving general authority to the Secretary of the Navy

[14] T. R. Schellenberg, "Methods of Coordinating the Work upon Records by the Department of Agriculture and the National Archives," read before an in-service training group of the Department of Agriculture, August 21, 1939 [Washington, 1939], 2-3.

similar to that bestowed upon the Secretary of Agriculture by the act of 1907. The destruction of the proceedings of summary courts martial after being on file for a period of two years in the department was provided for by act of February 16, 1909. The commander-in-chief of the fleet was empowered by the act of August 22, 1912, to sell as waste paper the files of vessels of the Navy not needed or useful in the transaction of current business and having no permanent value or historical interest. No papers less than two years old and no correspondence or related papers with officers or representatives of a foreign government were to be destroyed under this authorization. A report of records disposed of was to be made to the secretary. The foregoing act constituted an amendment to the act of 1889; a further amendment was passed on March 3, 1915. According to this act accumulations of files more than two years old in navy yards and stations could be disposed of on the authorization of the Secretary of the Navy, who was required to submit reports concerning the records destroyed to Congress.

An examination of the lists of useless papers reported to the House of representatives by the Department of the Navy under the act of 1889 revealed the destruction of certain old records of the Bureau of Steam Engineering, which were no less valuable than others that have been preserved. Some of these records, indeed, are closely related to series now in the National Archives. The destroyed records were correspondence and reports of the Engineer Corps for the 1840's and similar records relating to the construction of the New Navy in the 1880's.[15]

Special acts for the destruction of records continued to be enacted after the approval of the general law of 1889. By the act of July 16, 1894, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General were authorized to destroy after ten years all money order statements, paid money orders, and paid postal notes accompanying the same filed in the office of the auditor of the Treasury for the Post Office Department. Under this act 224 tons of papers for the years 1864 to 1884 were sold for $1,650. The retention period on these records was reduced to seven years by the act of March 3, 1897, and on the first two classes to three years by the act of May 27, 1908. The latter act also authorized the destruction of descriptive lists of international money orders and all coupons of issued international money orders filed in

[15] Listed in *House Report* No. 1175, Jan. 8, 1921, 66 Congress, 3 Sess., 2-3.

the General Accounting Office. Another act of June 13, 1898, gave the Post Office Department authority to destroy reports of arrivals and departures of the mails and certificates of oaths taken by carriers on mail routes, one year after the end of the contract term to which they related. More comprehensive was the act of May 11, 1906, which provided for the sale as waste paper of the files accumulated or to be accumulated in post offices, which were not of current use and which lacked permanent value or historical interest.[16] The Secretary of State was empowered on February 24, 1903, to destroy invoices filed in consular offices for a period of over five years. By the sundry civil appropriation act of August 24, 1912, the chairman of the Panama Canal Commission was authorized to destroy or otherwise dispose of duplications in the files and other papers.

Other acts have been passed more recently. Paid check files of the Treasury department and the General Accounting Office were authorized for destruction by the act of June 22, 1926. By the act of May 29, 1928, the act of August 7, 1882, concerning useless documents of the House and the Senate was re-enacted. On April 11, 1930, the Commissioner of Patents was authorized to destroy pension applications and accompanying papers which were twenty years old. Duplicate accounts of United States marshals, attorneys, clerks, and commissioners, and other miscellaneous papers or records, not in cases, and proof of claims filed in bankruptcy proceedings on file for ten years or more in the offices of clerks of district courts of the United States were authorized for destruction by the Attorney General by the act of June 3, 1930, upon the recommendation of the clerks and the senior district judges.

An attempt to improve the methods used by the departments in handling the disposition of useless executive papers was initiated in 1925 by the Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure. This board functioned under the Office of the Chief Co-ordinator, which had been created in the Bureau of the Budget in 1921 to effect co-ordination between agencies of the government in the conduct of its business transactions.[17] Under Executive Order No. 3578 of

[16] These acts and those in the following paragraph are digested in the following: *Disposition of Certain Records of the United States Government. Hearing before the Committee on Disposition of Executive Papers House of Representatives Seventy-fifth Congress First Session on H. R. 7504.* July 1 and 2, 1937 (Washington, 1937).

[17] U. S. Office of the Chief Co-ordinator, The Federal Service of Coordination; a Brief Outline of Its History, Organization and Operations, 1927, in Office of the Chief

November 8, 1921, which defined the duties of the Chief Co-ordinator, the Bureau of the Budget created by Circular No. 137, dated May 16, 1924, the Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure. The purpose of this board was to promote economy and efficiency in the routine office procedure in departments and establishments through simplicity and uniformity of practice as to matters not already assigned elsewhere by law or executive order. The board was to consist of the chairmen of departmental committees on simplified office procedure, which the circular directed should be established by the heads of each department and establishment.

Among the procedures dealt with by the board was that having to do with the disposition of useless executive papers. During a visit to the New York Custom House an investigator of the Bureau of the Budget observed shelf after shelf of what appeared to be worthless records, an opinion which was concurred in by the officials there, who agreed to take immediate action to report for destruction the records determined to be valueless.[18] Upon his return to Washington the investigator prepared a memorandum for the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, which was referred by him to the Chief Co-ordinator and by the latter to the Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure. This memorandum was the basis of the following circular, which is about as pertinent today as when it was issued, and which for that reason is reproduced.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL BOARD ON SIMPLIFIED OFFICE PROCEDURE

Washington

July 14, 1925

MEMORANDUM No. 16.

TO THE HEADS OF ALL DEPARTMENTS AND ESTABLISHMENTS:

SUBJECT: Disposition of useless Executive papers.

The Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure believes that a general policy governing the destruction of useless Executive papers should be established in each department, establishment, bureau and administrative office of the Executive Government.

Co-ordinator, Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure, file 230.432, disposition of useless executive papers (The National Archives) (hereafter cited as I.B.S.O.P. file); Edward F. Rowse, The Beginnings of Standardization of Forms and Procedures in the Federal Executive Departments (MS in the National Archives). The writer is indebted to T. R. Schellenberg for an indication of the existence of this board.

[18] C. C. Van Leer, memorandum, April 17, 1925, I.B.S.O.P. file.

A report to Congress, dated March 3, 1925, of useless papers recommended for destruction in accordance with the provisions of the Act of February 16, 1889 (25 Stat., L. 672), by one Department shows that of 46 field offices only 17 reported any papers, and the offices reporting varied in the number of classes of paper reported from one class at one station to 220 classes at another; the time varied in one class of papers from all on file to 1900 to all on file prior to 1922; in other words one office considered that this class of papers should be retained 25 years before destruction while another considered it useless after three years; the opinion of officials in other offices reporting varied between these periods.

It is natural that so long as the question of how long any class of papers should be retained is left to individual opinion or to the decisions of different committees there will be a wide variation in the class of papers retained, as well as the length of time they are retained.

While it is no doubt true that owing to different conditions, the same class of papers should be retained for a longer period in one office than in another, it is equally true that there are many classes of papers which from their very nature will not have any value after a certain time at any station.

In order to determine definitely which class of papers should be permanently retained and which destroyed after designated periods, it has been suggested that a procedure along the following general lines be followed:

> A committee of experienced employees to be appointed in and for each bureau; a list and sample of each kind of paper or document in the files of such bureau, including its field stations and offices, be submitted to the committee for consideration and recommendation; the committee to submit to the head of the bureau or office a *tentative* recommendation showing which classes of papers in its opinion should be retained permanently and which destroyed after, say—one, three, five, etc., years; these recommendations to be mimeographed and copies sent to each official, including those in the field, having charge or expert knowledge of such papers, with the request that comments and recommendations for improving the tentative plan be submitted; after sufficient time for plan to be again considered by the committee in the light of the comments and a final recommendation made to the head of the bureau by whom, if approved, it would be submitted to the head of the Department for approval.

If the plan be approved by the head of the department it would become a fixed and uniform policy and made a part of bureau or office regulations.

All officials will know exactly what papers may be recommended for destruction each year, and there would be an even flow of useless papers to destruction, freeing and keeping free for current use many

thousands of square feet of filing or storage space now used for records that should be destroyed.

The vexing question, always a deterrent to prompt action, of determining anew every time papers are to be destroyed just which should be retained and which recommended for destruction, with the inevitable differing results at different field stations and in different years, would be avoided.

It is known that at least one of the military services, in order to maintain the mobility of its field organizations and free them from a long accumulation of old and useless records, has after study definitely determined those papers that may be destroyed after retaining them for specified times and has made the policy a part of the departmental regulations.

While it is not a question of mobility with the civil organizations of the Government, there is the question of the ever increasing demand for more and more costly space in which to file useless records.

With the approval of the Chief Coordinator, your comments and suggestions are desired as to the adoption of the above or some similar practicable policy within your Service for determining definitely those papers which shall, after retention for specified times, be reported annually for disposition and for insuring that such reports are made annually.

FRANK L. WELLS
Assistant Chief Coordinator
Secretary

For several months after the issuance of the foregoing circular, responses were received from the agencies to which it had been addressed. The departments of Commerce, Navy, and Treasury, and the Government Printing Office, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, and the Panama Canal Commission indicated that they were following a procedure similar to that outlined in the circular. The Department of Agriculture replied that the bureaus of the department were generally in favor of the suggested plan, that in three of them it was already virtually in effect, and that three others were initiating it. From the Department of the Interior came the report that all of its activities had considered the plan and generally approved of it, and several bureaus had already appointed committees. The War Department, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and the United States Shipping Board expressed approval of the proposal. The replies from the Post Office Department and the Civil Service Commission gave some information about their own procedure, but made no direct comment on the board's suggestion. The Department of State and the United States Tariff

Commission informed the board that their records were mostly permanent in character and that their useless papers were regularly disposed of. The Veterans' Bureau stated that it was preparing an order and that the procedure outlined in the circular would be considered in doing this. As a result, this agency issued General Order No. 341 on January 27, 1926, which modified the previous procedure for the disposition of useless papers by placing it in the hands of a committee whose recommendations when approved by the director were to be the authority for reporting the records for destruction.

The board did not follow up its attempt to secure the adoption of a general policy governing the destruction of useless executive papers. It concluded from the responses received from the departments that their interest had been aroused and that the plan outlined in the circular would be generally followed.[19] The appointment of committees by some agencies placed the handling of lists of useless papers upon a better basis. The procedure, however, remained much the same. It is doubtful if any agency made the extensive survey and appraisal of its records which would have been necessary to have fulfilled the scheme proposed by the board. If carried through, this scheme would have furnished the data necessary for the preparation of a retention and disposal schedule. Unless the Forest Service was influenced by the circular, no schedules appear to have resulted.

The visit of the Bureau of the Budget investigator to the New York Custom House appears to have been the cause of the issuance of a circular by the Treasury Department on the disposition of useless papers. This same circular was also issued on June 3, 1925, by the Department of Labor and was worded as follows:

DISPOSITION OF USELESS PAPERS

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Office of the Secretary,
Washington, May 16, 1925.

1925
Department Circular No. 358
Chief Clerk

To Heads of Bureaus and Offices, and Chiefs of Divisions, Secretary's Office, Treasury Department.

Your attention is invited to the provisions of the act approved Febru-

[19] A. H. Erck, assistant chief co-ordinator, Memorandum for the Chief Co-ordinator, Dec. 23, 1926, I.B.S.O.P. file.

ary 16, 1889, concerning the dispositon of useless executive papers in the departments, which reads as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That whenever there shall be in any one of the executive departments of the Government an accumulation of files of papers which are not needed or useful in the transaction of the current business of such department and have no permanent value or historical interest it shall be the duty of the head of such department to submit to Congress a report of that fact, accompanied by a concise statement of the condition and character of such papers. And upon the submission of such report it shall be the duty of the presiding officer of the Senate to appoint two Senators, and of the Speaker of the House of Representatives to appoint two Representatives, and the Senators and Representatives so appointed shall constitute a joint committee, to which shall be referred such report, with the accompanying statement of the condition and character of such papers, and such joint committee shall meet and examine such report and statement and the papers therein described, and submit to the Senate and House, respectively, a report of such examination and their recommendation. And if they report that such files of papers, or any part thereof, are not needed or useful in the transaction of the current business of such department, and have no permanent value or historical interest, then it shall be the duty of such head of the department to sell as waste paper or otherwise dispose of such files of papers upon the best obtainable terms, after due publication of notice inviting proposals therefor, and receive and pay the proceeds thereof into the Treasury of the United States and make report thereof to Congress.

Also to the provisions of Executive Order No. 1499, dated March 16, 1912:

It is hereby ordered that before reporting to Congress useless files of papers to be disposed of under the provisions of the act of February 16, 1889, as extended and amended by section 1, chapter 189, of the act of March 2, 1895, lists of such papers shall be submitted to the Librarian of Congress in order that the several executive departments may have the benefit of his views as to the wisdom of preserving such of the papers as he may deem to be of historical interest.

From the reports submitted by the various bureaus, offices, and divisions of the department, it appears that no uniform method of procedure has been followed in carrying into effect the provisions of the above act. In some instances, especially in activities having field services, it has been observed that the decision as to what documents should be retained or destroyed is left largely to the discretion of the field offices, notwithstanding the fact that the bureau, office, or division in Washington is in a better position to direct what classes of papers on file in these various field offices are of no further value to the Government.

The benefits to be derived from systematic and periodic surveys of the

files of the department are obvious, in that each activity will have available at regular intervals an appreciable amount of filing space and filing equipment for current files. Not only will the Government receive a regular income from the proceeds of the sale of useless papers but a considerable saving would be effected through a reduction in the purchase of new filing equipment and less demand for additional floor space. The space situation, both within and outside the District of Columbia, is such that the retention of useless files in either rented or Government-owned space becomes an extravagance and should be corrected at once.

It is thought that a complete survey of the files at this time will prove extremely beneficial and should begin at once. To accomplish this, you are requested to designate a committee in your bureau, office, or division to effect this investigation at the earliest possible moment. This committee should have permanent status and handle from time to time all questions relating to the subject of useless papers.

It is suggested that each bureau, office, and division instruct its committee to obtain a sample of each kind of paper or document in its files, list such samples, and after mature consideration submit to the head of the activity a tentative recommendation showing which classes of papers should be recommended for destruction periodically after a lapse of a specified number of years. When such a list has been approved, copies should be sent to each official having charge of such file papers with the request that the classes of papers noted thereon as recommended for destruction be incorporated in the annual or semiannual report on the subject to be made by the head of the activity to the Secretary of the Treasury.

Exception may be taken by the congressional committee or the Librarian of Congress to certain classes of files contained in the report submitted to the Congress, and these should be carefully noted by the respective departmental committees, so that a definite policy regarding the retention of these papers may be kept on file for the benefit of the activity involved. It is particularly desired of activities having field offices that every effort be made to set up a systematic method of procedure in the immediate future in order that the next report to the Congress will reflect a more uniform method in the recommendations of the department to the Congress than has heretofore been the case.

Another feature in connection with the disposition of useless documents which has not been handled properly by some of the department bureaus and offices is the prompt elimination of such papers as are authorized for destruction by Congress and the immediate reporting of their disposition to the department. Particularly is this true of activities having field offices. While such authority is usually granted in the early part of March of each year, reports of disposition are often received 8 and 10 months later. This condition should not exist, and while it is recognized that a certain period of time must elapse before papers to be destroyed can be grouped and sold, it should be known that reports of disposition are consolidated

in one departmental report and transmitted to the Congress usually at the beginning of each regular session. In the future, when a report of disposition is delayed more than 90 days a letter of explanation must accompany the report.

GARRARD B. WINSTON,
Acting Secretary of the Treasury

The Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedure again interested itself in the useless papers problem in 1932. It was motivated this time by a desire to reduce the space occupied by records. To accomplish this end, it requested the departments to provide it with information as to their procedure in regard to the disposal of useless records.[20] A number of letters were received in reply, which were hardly detailed enough to do anything with. On April 21, 1933, the Chief Co-ordinator sent out a circular calling attention to the act of 1889 and the executive order of 1912 relating to the disposition of useless executive papers and suggesting that Treasury Department Circular No. 358 of May 16, 1925, be examined for the proper procedure. The efforts of the board and of the Chief Co-ordinator were soon brought to an end, for on June 10, 1933, when the Federal Co-ordinating Service was abolished, it ceased functioning.[21] In more recent years considerable progress has been made along the lines proposed by the board, as will be indicated in the section of this paper pertaining to schedules.

A recent development in the procedure for the disposal of valueless papers—the use of records retention and disposal schedules—apparently had its germ in early lists of useless papers submitted to Congress by the department of the Treasury. The Office of Internal Revenue on November 2, 1889, submitted a schedule of papers, showing in columnar form the room number, form number, description of papers, cubic feet, and recommendation as to disposition.[22] This schedule, which might be called a disposal schedule, since it listed only records that were to be disposed of, was arranged according to form number and indicated under the recommendation the period of time the record was to be kept before disposal or some other disposition. Similar schedules were submitted by the Public Health Service and the supervising architect from time to time.

[20] Jack W. Heard, Executive Chairman, I.B.S.O.P., to all members of the I.B.S.O.P., Dec. 15, 1932, I.B.S.O.P. file.
[21] Rowse, *loc. cit.*, 6.
[22] 51 Congress, 1 Sess., *Senate Executive Document* No. 44.

An improvement on the foregoing schedules was made in 1917 by the United States Coast Guard. It submitted a schedule to the department of the Treasury which listed three classes of records: (*a*) to be permanently retained, (*b*) for destruction after the lapse of the indicated periods, and (*c*) those that may be destroyed at once.[23] This schedule went further than the earlier ones prepared in the department of the Treasury and included records that were to be retained as well as those that were to be disposed of. It is the earliest records retention and disposal schedule that has been found.

The first agency to make effective use of the retention and disposal schedule was the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture. Exercising the authority given him by the act of 1907, the Secretary of Agriculture conferred upon the head of the Forest Service in 1917 the power to destroy its records. By 1930 the procedure developed by this agency included the use of a schedule covering all its records. In 1938 a revised schedule was prepared with the cooperation of the National Archives and issued in the *Forest Service Manual, General Administration.*

The advantages of the employment of schedules in connection with the disposition of records are that this method ensures the systematic and efficient elimination of the worthless records. These cannot be disposed of without considering their relation to the rest of the records that are being produced by an agency. The chief reason for the destruction of records is the fact that they are duplicated in some manner in other records which are to be retained. By scheduling all of the records it is ensured that the valuable ones will be retained.

Since the initial schedule was prepared in the Forest Service, others have followed in the Department of Agriculture. Schedules now exist for the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Bureau of Animal Industry, and the Soil Conservation Service.

A number of other agencies have also begun the use of schedules. The Bureau of Supplies and Accounts of the Department of the Navy became interested in scheduling its numerous forms in 1939, and during the year 1942 this was accomplished. All of the records of this department are to be scheduled during 1943. The War Department has undertaken a similar program. Progress has been made in sched-

[23] 66 Congress, 1 Sess., *House Executive Document* No. 194.

uling the records of the Bureau of Old Age and Survivors Insurance of the Social Security Board and other schedules are being developed in that bureau. In the Federal Security Agency the records of the Food and Drug Administration have been scheduled.

The scheduling of records promises to be the best method to be used in their disposal. It has been facilitated by the passage of a recent act of Congress relating to the disposal of records.[24]

HENRY P. BEERS

The National Archives

[24] For suggestions resulting from reading the manuscript the writer is indebted to the following persons: P. C. Brooks, O. W. Holmes, J. R. Masterson, Thad Page, T. B. Rowland and E. F. Rowse.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Richard G. Wood, Editor

The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

The Repair and Preservation of Records, by Adelaide E. Minogue. *Bulletins* of the National Archives, No. 5. (Washington. September, 1943. Pp. 56.)

The foreword of this *Bulletin* states that it is designed to set out the methods of rehabilitating archives and manuscripts used in the National Archives because these methods are especially adapted to war-time emergencies. The introduction declares the purpose of the *Bulletin* is to meet the need for a practical handbook based upon the most recent scientific investigation. The second claim is sounder than the first since most of the equipment and procedures described are too bulky or intricate for emergency use.

The first section is devoted to paper manufacture and the various tests that may be used to determine strength and purity. Also discussed in some detail are those factors frequently present in storage areas which cause or accelerate natural aging. Suggestions here given for control of light, temperature, humidity, sulphur dioxide, and ozone are well stated and the recommendations made will repay careful study. The discussion of dust control and filter systems leaves something to be desired particularly in that the newer developments in the field, such as the Westinghouse Precipitron apparatus, which bid fair to revolutionize air-conditioning systems, are not mentioned at all. Methods of fumigation and protection from fire and water are adequately handled.

The largest part of the *Bulletin* is given over to methods of repair, cleaning, flattening, and reinforcement. The compressed air cleaning table is described together with humidifying and ironing machines for bulk flattening of paper. A table of solvents for stains is provided although without statement as to any tests that may have been made of them. Comments on the washing of paper disregard the fact that with suitable equipment even very badly deteriorated documents may be soaked without damage. These, of course, since they have developed high acidity, are the ones most in need of such treatment. Discussion of faded inks is limited to observations on photography and visibility under ultra-violet light and there is no discussion of chemical means save the statement, without reference, that it cannot be safely undertaken without jeopardizing the strength of the paper and the ultimate permanence of the writing.

Methods of reinforcement are given in considerable detail with sections on inlay, mounting, glazing, and resizing. Restoration by pasting sheets of

crepeline or Japanese tissue over damaged material is described and the conclusion that use of these processes is expensive and never completely satisfactory is sound. Restoration by the use of transparent cellulose sheetings is treated fully. Those with adhesive are considered satisfactory for certain types of work but their limitations are not completely explained. Those without adhesive, which are applied under heat and pressure, are stated rightly to be the best for all purposes. Fairly complete instructions are provided for the preparation and lamination of material in a steam-heated hydraulic press. Reference is given to a simpler and less expensive press.

The *Bulletin* is completed with sections on special problems of restoring maps, photographic reproductions, burned and soaked records. Suggestions are also made concerning preservation of bindings, seals, and parchment, and there is a brief treatment of boxing and shelving with emphasis on vertical rather than horizontal filing.

The *Bulletin* has assembled more pertinent information on repair and preservation of records than has heretofore been available and custodians of documents should be very grateful for its contribution. Descriptions are drawn almost completely from practices in the National Archives and conclusions represent largely those of a single institution. As excellent as these are in many respects, other institutions will find themselves at variance with many of them. Since many working details are omitted such as time, temperature, etc., needed for particular operations, and since there is nowhere any statement of how errors made during the process of repair may be corrected, the *Bulletin* does not meet the need of a complete manual and cannot be used by an untrained person.

W. J. Barrow and R. W. Church

Virginia State Library

"Peregrinations of an Itinerant Microphotographer—Microfilming the Journals of State Legislatures," by William S. Jenkins. *The Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 5 (December, 1942), 177-197.

Microphotography provides a feasible means of assembling in one place copies of large bodies of research materials which cannot themselves be so assembled. It also opens the road to a new type of documentary publication with the master negative substituted for the printer's plates and the positive print for the finished book. Obviously, if these newer uses of the microfilm medium are to attain high repute, the possibilities of the medium must be appreciated and its limtations respected. Projects must be wisely selected, carefully planned, and well executed. The Library of Congress project for microcopying colonial, territorial, and state legislative journals appears to meet these standards. It was under Professor Jenkins' immediate supervision until the war forced its suspension, and, in his article, he traces it from its

origin. The value of the article, aside from its proof of the possibilities of itinerant microphotography, lies in the stress placed on preliminary planning, in the discussion of the special problems and emergencies that arose during the high-speed microfilming campaign covering thirty states, and in the explanation of the steps taken and editorial devices adopted to make the completed film fully comprehensible to users. Anyone responsible for planning or executing large-scale microfilming projects will do well to study Professor Jenkins' article, and anyone interested in the finished product of his travels should consult the "Checklist of State Legislative Journals on Microfilm" published in *The Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 5 (September, 1942), 150-160. Finally, this reviewer has two observations to make: First, a writer seeking to convey to readers the benefit of experience gained during itinerant operations would, it is believed, find an analytical approach more successful than Professor Jenkins' method of giving a step by step account of his trip. Second, the several institutions pioneering in the creation of microfilm edited for scholarly purposes would do well to undertake co-operative study of such problems as project selection and editorial techniques.

PRESTON W. EDSALL

North Carolina State College

Company Museums, by Laurence Vail Coleman, director, American Association of Museums. (Washington, D.C. The American Association of Museums, 1943. Pp. viii, 173. $2.50.)

When visiting company museums, two questions always come to my mind—and probably to yours, viz., (1) "Is this activity worth what it costs?" and (2) "Should my company have a museum?"

In his well-written book *Company Museums*, Laurence Vail Coleman does not attempt to prove a company museum is worth its cost. He allows you to infer from what he tells you that properly conceived and managed, it's an asset. When he tells you about the museums maintained by Aluminum Company of America, Bell Telephone, Eastman, Ford, General Motors, Hammermill, and Western Union, he lets you decide if they are crazy or if the idea is sound.

After a hasty but informative glance at existing museums, the author presumes his reader has decided to start a museum—or improve the one he already has—and gets right down to brass tacks in explaining how this should be done. He convinces you he knows what he's talking about and that if you follow his suggestions your museum will be a success. He even does not neglect to tell you how to attract visitors—so again the theory of the world beating a path to the forest home of the mousetrap maker is ignored—rightly.

Perhaps when you have reached the end of the last chapter, your enthusiasm

will bring you into agreement with Coleman's thesis that the company museum is one of the activities that will enjoy great expansion after the war.

You certainly will agree when he says, "Museums do not appear where there is an attitude like that of one high executive who forestalled 'such nonsense' by falling upon a collection of his company's early products with a club. But they tend to take root where the management has a sense of tradition and pride in the firm and holds a liberal view of its work."

FRANK M. ROOT
Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company

Measures Relating to Vital Records and Vital Statistics, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Report of the Bureau of the Budget on Measures Relating to Vital Statistics. Union Calendar No. 214. House Document No. 242. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1943. Pp. vii, 264.)

Establishing a Bureau of Vital Records in the United States Public Health Service. Hearing Before a Subcommittee on Commerce United States Senate Seventy-Eighth Congress Second Session on S. 1096. . . . January 13, 1944. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1944. Pp. 52.)

These documents grew out of President Roosevelt's letter to the president of the Senate on July 27, 1942, in which he wrote "There is at the present time a great confusion in the field of vital records growing out of the activities of Government and industry, particularly in connection with the security and health laws. There is need for a comprehensive study to be made to determine requirements and make recommendation to prevent duplication of effort and to integrate the activities of all agencies concerned." Mr. Roosevelt went on to direct the Bureau of the Budget to make the study, the product of which is printed in the first of the above titles.

Included in the volume are: "Report of the Commission on Vital Records, Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, February 3, 1943" prepared under the direction of Dr. Lowell J. Reed of Johns Hopkins University (pp. 14-22); "Report of Vital Records Committee of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, March 25, 1943" (pp. 23-31); and five sections compiled by Dr. Halbert Dunn, chief statistician for vital statistics, Bureau of the Census, covering "Uses of Vital Records" (pp. 32-38), "Development and Present Status of State and Local Vital Statistics Offices" (pp. 39-93), "Development and Present Status of the Division of Vital Statistics, Bureau of the Census" (pp. 94-117), "Other Undertakings . . . in the Field of Vital Records" (pp. 118-122), and "Analysis of Costs of

Vital Records (pp. 123-127). A valuable selection of exhibits, including tables, charts, and forms, completes the volume.

The Bureau of the Budget concludes (1) that while a national population registration should be carried out, it is not essential during the war, (2) that a national vital records office should be established as a separate organizational unit in the United States Public Health Service, and (3) that the pending legislative proposals to authorize certain agencies to issue documents as substitutes for birth certificates should not be enacted.

The second title listed above covers the hearings held by the subcommittee of the Committee on Commerce of the United States Senate January 13, 1944, on S. 1096, "The Vital Records Act." This proposed act grew out of the report of the Bureau of the Budget described above.

This proposed legislation would authorize the appropriation of $2,000,000 annually for allotment by a bureau of vital records, in the United States Public Health Service, to the states for the purpose of "assisting States and their political subdivisions in establishing and maintaining adequate vital records services including the training of personnel for State and local vital records work" and, the functions of the Division of Vital Statistics of the Bureau of the Census would be transferred to the United States Public Health Service. The hearing brings out the distinction between vital records and vital statistics, the faults in existing vital records systems, the need for federal-state co-operation and highlights the line versus staff concept of federal agency organization.

It must be noted that S. 1096 has not yet been reported out by the Senate committee.

Archivists, students of government, and administrative officials at local, state, and federal levels of government will find these documents a useful synthesis of current vital records and vital statistics problems and the points of view on their solution.

JOHN C. L. ANDREASSEN

Federal Works Agency

War Records Projects in the States, 1941-1943, by Lester J. Cappon, library consultant in history and archives, assistant professor of history, University of Virginia. (Washington, D.C. The American Association for State and Local History, 1944. Pp. 38.)

The author is eminently qualified to appraise these projects since he has been in the center of activities in this field from the beginning. Under the authorization of the Social Science Research Council, he made a study of such projects in the first World War (published in 1943), and is now the chairman of the committee on state and local records of the American Association for State and Local History.

The report contains several sections dealing with the twenty-nine state projects in regard to: their administration and operation; problems of collecting and selection; means of informing and arousing the public; types of war records being collected; writing war history; and post-war planning. He has appended a chronological list of projects through 1943.

Mr. Cappon feels that collecting war records presupposes an intelligent concept of aims and objectives along with an understanding of the practical problems involved; he says that these conditions are more prevalent today than in 1917-1918, and that it is "a safe prediction that the program of archival science and practice during the past twenty years will be reflected in the better preservation of state official records of the present war as compared with that during and after World War I."

Types of records being collected are in the following categories: governmental; records of economic, political, social and religious organizations; newspapers; personal papers and manuscripts; books, pamphlets, and periodicals; posters, music, films, and photographs; museum objects; data compiled by questionnaire; interviews; and special investigations.

This appraisal is well done and should encourage those engaged in the work, as well as inspire others to lend a hand.

William D. Overman
Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, Akron, Ohio

War Records Handbook, compiled by the Division of Archives and History, [New York] State Education Department. (Albany, N.Y. The University of the State of New York Press, 1943. Pp. 31.)

This is at once a practical manual of instruction and a justification of local war records preservation. The five reasons given for such activity would apply in any state: to provide data for local and community histories, to create funds for later selection by libraries and museums, to supply school exhibits, to provide bases for veterans' claims, and to enlighten future leaders by the lessons of experience. Advice is wisely given to emphasize records of local activities rather than of national ones of which evidence happens to appear in the locality. The suggestion that collectors list the war organizations in their regions first in order to decide upon the selection and arrangement of materials should assure some orderly pattern to the work. The wide variety of possible types of war records is explained and also emphasized by catch-lines inserted at the foot of successive pages.

Most of the handbook consists of a "Summary of Types of War Records," which is in large part really a list of activities that might be recorded. The outline of this list, or the later recommendation of an alphabetical filing system, might induce some collectors to rearrange in subject or alphabetical order the records of organizations in which the original order would have

archival significance. This would be particularly deplorable if, as some headings on war-time living and economic conditions in the summary appear to suggest, local collectors took over records of public bodies. There is, indeed, a caution to the effect that federal, state, and local agencies will probably take care of their own records.

Advice on arrangement and care of collections is commendably brief and simple. Fortunately careful dating and labeling of everything are emphasized. Scrapbooks are recommended only in very small communities, and even for them it is wisely stated that an unindexed scrapbook is worthless.

PHILIP C. BROOKS

The National Archives

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States Food Administration, 1917-1920: Part 1, The Headquarters Organization, by the National Archives. Preliminary Inventory No. 3, Part 1. (Washington, D.C. The National Archives, July, 1943. Pp. xlv, 335.)

Keenly cognizant that adequate guides are imperative if the contents of major groups of records are to be made readily available to government officials, research workers, and other investigators, the archivist of the United States inaugurated in February, 1941, a systematic program of compiling and issuing finding aids that will serve this purpose. The initial objective is preliminary check-lists that indicate the series, files, volumes, or other units of the major record groups as they are found or tentatively arranged. The second objective is preliminary inventories in processed form for general distribution. After the arrangement of each group is completed, final inventories are to be issued. During the present war, the program is to be limited to preliminary finding aids for the records concerning war and post-war problems.

This preliminary inventory covers the records of the United States Food Administration's offices in Washington, its Milling Division and its Sugar Distributing Committee which had headquarters in New York and Chicago respectively, and certain regional offices operated by several of the organizational units. The records of the state, territorial, and local food administrations are to be covered in the second part. The records of closely associated agencies, such as the United States Grain Corporation and the Sugar Equalization Board, are also to have separate preliminary inventories.

The introduction (pp. ix-xvi) provides a brief history of the Food Administration and its records and indicates it relationship to associated agencies. The first part of the bibliography (pp. xvii-xlv) is a selected list of contemporary articles, writings by administration officials, and secondary studies concerning the organization, functions, activities, and records of the administration. The

second lists the printed publications of the administration insofar as they have been found in the National Archives. Both parts of the bibliography include references on the associated agencies.

In the inventory proper, the entries for the records of each main division of the administration are prefaced with a brief statement that gives pertinent administrative history, functions, and main officials. The wording of entries indicates the nature of each group of records, the period covered, the arrangement (alphabetical or chronological), the extent in linear inches, and the classification number.

Considering the time and labor involved in arranging the Food Administration's vast mass of records and in preparing this inventory, any statement to the effect that the work is well done hardly seems adequate. It is undoubtedly a great boon to all investigators who wish to know about the food and related problems of the first World War.

EVERETT E. EDWARDS

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Informe que Mario Briceño-Iragorry, Archivero Nacional, presenta al Ministro de Relaciones Interiores sobre las labores del Instituto en el año de 1942. Estados Unidos de Venezuela, Archivo Nacional. (Caracas. Imprenta Nacional, 1943. Pp. 14.)

It is a source of some regret to North American archivists that so little is published about the work and problems, past and present, of the Central and South American archival establishments. Individuals who are curious about these institutions may often leaf the pages of many numbers of many volumes of their quarterly and annual archival *boletines* without finding anything to reward their search. A feeling of enthusiasm and anticipation therefore greets the appearance of an item such as this separately published report of the national archivist of Venezuela to the Minister of the Interior for the year 1942.

In a closely-printed document of about a dozen pages of text, the archivist describes the training courses given by an institute within the National Archives of Venezuela on colonial paleography and the cataloguing of documents. There are paragraphs on packing and shelving; accessions; documents published and exchanged; the new quarters occupied by the archives; and other matters which have concerned the archives during the year. Occupying nearly four pages of the text is a discussion of desirable reforms of the National Archives law with a draft of the proposed bill. The suggested legislation is concerned mainly with the formation of a *junta superior de archivos*, which could be described as a governing council and would be composed of the national archivist, the director of the National Library, the director of the Academy of National History, the director of culture in the

Ministry of Education, and the inspector general of archives and public registers.

The brevity of the present report prevents more than a mere glance at the archives of Venezuela for 1942. But brief though it is, the document will find eager readers. These certainly hope that more and more the archivists of the good neighbor nations will come to publish annual and other descriptive accounts of their work, if not in their regularly-appearing quarterlies, then separately like the present document.

GASTON LITTON

The National Archives

"Post-War Plans for the Vermont Historical Society," *Vermont Quarterly*, 41 (January, 1944), 41, 42.

Regents Plan for Postwar Education in the State of New York, The State Education Department (Albany, 1944), pp. 21-23.

Postwar Public Works Program for a State Historical Building, Michigan Historical Commission (Lansing, 1943); see also *Michigan History*, 28 (April-June, 1944), 247-289.

The news from these three states located on or near the forty-second parallel indicates that plans for post-war archives buildings are, indeed, burgeoning. All three complain of over-crowding and the lack of adequate modern facilities in their present quarters. The Vermont and New York statements are rather brief, but the Michigan report is a comprehensive study of the factors involved in formulating a building program.

Vermont proposes to "establish a centralized archives for the non-current records of the State" by building an annex to the existing structure housing the historical activities of the state. The annex is envisioned as a simple, functional building occupied "almost entirely by stacks and files for books and records." Provision is to be made for vaults for the storage of the most valuable archival material, as well as for the storage of film. The size and cost of the proposed annex are not mentioned.

The Board of Regents of the state of New York recommends the erection of a state archives building as a part of the post-war building program and sets $1,000,000 as the approximate cost of the structure. The building would be located at Albany and it is envisioned as the headquarters of the archival system of the state. It is claimed that the anticipated cost is much less than it would be if New York were not proceeding with the execution of the regional plan which calls for a depository in each of the large municipalities. The estimated quantity of state departmental records available for immediate transfer in the Albany area amounts to about 3,500,000 linear feet. No details of the proposed building are given.

The two Michigan publications cover substantially the same ground. The historical commission's *Program for a State Historical Building* is a mimeographed booklet of forty-three pages without illustrations. The *Michigan History* magazine gives forty-two pages to the program and includes several pictorial charts that graphically delineate the situation. Included in the *Program* are sections devoted to the historical background of the commission, its publications, field work, proposed budgets, proposed professional projects, justifications for the various services rendered or proposed, and comparisons with the historical appropriations of neighboring states. The state historical building is to include the state archives, the state museum, and the commission's offices and work rooms. The building is to be located in Lansing, and it is to be of fireproof construction to cost $500,000 while $100,000 is allocated for equipment. While there are no details as to the structure it is envisioned as about 170 feet long, 95 feet deep, and 100 feet high, and capable of housing 20,000 feet of stack floor space, although 10,000 additional feet are recommended for expansion. Space and equipment checklists are also included.

Victor Gondos, Jr.

The National Archives

NEWS NOTES

Karl L. Trever, Editor

The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Christopher Bush Coleman, 1875-1944

The Society of American Archivists and the world of historical scholarship suffers an irreparable loss in the death of Christopher Bush Coleman on Sunday, June 25, 1944. Dr. Coleman was born at Springfield, Illinois, April 24, 1875. He received his bachelor's degree in arts at Yale in 1896, the bachelor of divinity degree at the University of Chicago in 1899, and the doctor of philosophy degree at Columbia in 1914. He was professor of history at Butler University, 1900 to 1919, serving as head of the Department of History and Political Science and later as vice-president of the university. He was head of the Department of History and Political Science at Allegheny College from 1920 to 1924. He had served as director of the Historical Bureau of Indiana since 1924 and also as secretary of the Indiana Historical Society. Between 1936 and 1942 he was director of the state library. He had been a member of the George Rogers Clark Memorial Commission of Indiana, 1927-1940, and executive secretary of the George Rogers Clark Sesquicentennial Commission, 1928-1935. Not least in importance he served as a member of the editorial board of THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST from its beginning.

In all these activities Christopher Bush Coleman showed himself a loyal and good friend, a willing and faithful worker, a man whose courage and integrity in time of need held up a standard around which the weaker could find courage to rally. Only those who served with him in the various historical services of Indiana can know how much he contributed to the historical progress of that state. His scholarly publications began with the study of Constantine the Great and the spurious Donation. There he learned the exactness of scholarship which characterized his work in the Western field and his direction of the Indiana Historical Collections.

He married Juliet Brown of Indianapolis, June 25, 1901. The children are Ruth (deceased), Constance, and Martha Julian. To his family in its bereavement go the sympathies of the members of the Society who knew and loved him.

The Society of American Archivists

The secretary announces the resignation of Harris H. Williams as chairman of the Society's committee on publicity. Elizabeth E. Hamer, assistant administrative secretary at the National Archives, has been appointed to suc-

ceed him. The membership chairman reports that Lt. Col. Handy B. Fant, formerly of the National Archives staff, has become the first life member of the Society.

Because it has been felt for some time that the circle of reviewers was too small, the review editor of THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST has sent return post cards to all members in an effort to find out what persons are interested in doing review work for the journal. The replies received indicate that there is a sufficient interest in review work to guarantee a prosperous future for the review section.

The National Archives

To the ever-growing group of War Department field records in the National Archives have been added records of the arsenals at Springfield, Massachusetts, 1794-1911, Watertown, Massachusetts, 1902-1917, and Frankford, Pennsylvania, 1911-1930; records of the Fort Omaha quartermaster, 1866-1900; records of Fort Stevens, Oregon, and Fort Canby (formerly Fort Cape Disappointment), Washington, 1867-1928; correspondence of the judge advocate and quartermaster, Department of Dakota, 1874-1904, and Department of Texas, 1879-1916; and records of the Department of Missouri, 1875-1910, of the Headquarters, Department of the Lakes, 1898-1910, and the Central Department, 1916-1920. Other material recently acquired includes a record set of published charts of coastal waters throughout the world, exclusive of the United States and its possessions, issued by the Hydrographic Office, Navy Department, 1869-1934; about 60,000 photographic negatives with corresponding prints made at the Philadelphia Naval Aircraft Factory of buildings, equipment, and aircraft in construction, 1918-1941; records of the headquarters of the Research Information Committee, 1917-1921, relating to the exchange of scientific, technical, and industrial research information among the allied governments; and records of shipping commissioners in fourteen major ports, 1873-1932, consisting of shipping articles and official logbooks of vessels.

The archivist of the United States has announced the appointment to the staff of the Division of War Department Archives of the National Archives of Herbert R. Rifkind, formerly of the Quartermaster General's Office, War Department. Matilda F. Hanson, a member of the staff since 1936, has been made librarian in place of Karl L. Trever, who is assisting the director of research and records description in the administration of the records description program. Members of the staff who have recently entered the armed services include Henry P. Beers and Vernon D. Tate.

The *Ninth Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1943*, recently issued, discusses the gigantic

problem posed by the records of the federal government—an estimated 16,000,000 cubic feet of them divided about equally between Washington and the field—and the efforts of the National Archives to deal with this problem. To conserve paper and funds, this report, which will be reviewed in THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST, was processed in a limited edition and copies will not be available for general distribution until it is published after the war.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

Fred W. Shipman, director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, has returned from a two months' visit to Italy where he went as temporary American archives adviser to the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Subcommission of the Allied Control Commission. Mr. Shipman collaborated with Hilary Jenkinson, secretary of the Public Record Office, who also was in Italy in a similar capacity representing the British government. Before returning to the United States, Mr. Shipman visited the archives in the provincial capitals of occupied Italy and Sicily. It is anticipated that some account of his experiences will be published in a future issue of THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST.

President Roosevelt has recently presented to the library additional sections of his White House files for the period March, 1933, to June, 1943. Two sections are made up of correspondence on national issues arising out of the war effort, such as the rights of Negro citizens with respect to the draft, government civil service, defense production, and the Smith-Connally anti-strike bill. Two other groups of correspondence contain much of interest for future students of the country's political history during the Roosevelt administrations. One consists of applications, endorsements, acceptances, and protests regarding the appointment of federal officials in the states, 1933-1937. The other, covering the same period, is comprised of letters written to the President and other national leaders of the Democratic Party by local and state committee members, Congressmen, and Senators, reporting on the political prospects in their districts and making recommendations as to the campaign strategy to be followed; although some of these letters relate to campaigns preceding the congressional elections of 1934, 1936, and 1938, most of the correspondence centers on the 1936 presidential campaign. Among other materials received from the White House are papers relating to the operations of the National Resources Planning Board, 1934-1941; invitations and Christmas greetings, letters accompanying gifts, and correspondence relating to the Birthday Balls, 1941-1942; and copies of the official stenographic reports of the President's addresses for 1943 and of his press conferences from July to December, 1943.

The President continues to add to the library's collection of naval manuscripts and prints. He has recently given the library the journal of the

U.S.S. *Hornet*, Alexander Claxton, commander, March 30-September 22, 1827, and the journal of the U.S.S. *St. Louis*, John D. Sloat, commander, March 4, 1829-December 9, 1831, as well as a notable collection of prints and lithographs of naval scenes of the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War.

Received from another donor was a small collection of New York state commissions as justices, coroners, inspectors, clerks of court, and militia officers issued to citizens of Dutchess and other counties between 1791 and 1820.

Samuel I. Rosenman, special counsel to the President and former justice of the New York Supreme Court, has been appointed by the President as a trustee of the library.

War Department, Adjutant General's Office, Records Division

The activation of the Records Division of the Adjutant General's Office in April, 1943 [see THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST, 6 (October, 1943), 261], gave increased impetus to the War Department's program of records administration. Previous handicaps of inadequate authority and supervisory powers were eliminated through the allocation to the division of the following functions: planning and directing the accession, administration, and preservation of all permanent records of the War Department and of the Army currently in the custody of the AGO or ultimately reverting to its custody; formulating policies and standards of record keeping and exercising staff supervision to insure the maintenance of those standards; initiating programs to assure offices are regularly relieved of unnecessary records; and reviewing and submitting to the National Archives all requests for disposal authority.

The diverse functions of the division have required the establishment of six branches, each concerned with specialized phases of records administration. The Records Management Branch, the executive and planning agency of the division, is primarily interested in problems of current records management. The War Department Records Branch, the custodian of noncurrent personnel and organization records of War Department agencies located in Washington, relieves those agencies by transferring to its custody their inactive records. Through its evaluation, collation, and processing of these files, the ultimate transfer to the National Archives of records having permanent value is greatly facilitated. The Microfilming Branch, the agency responsible for the study and evaluation of all suitable microfilm projects (except V-mail), also exercises technical supervision over filming operations. It now has more than eighty cameras in operation throughout the United States and in several theaters of military operation. The Demobilized Personnel Records Branch, High Point, North Carolina, the custodian of

permanent noncurrent records of enlisted personnel discharged after 1912, performs a vital function in servicing the increasing flow of requests for information, pension claims, and like inquiries initiated by individual and governmental agencies. The Organization Records Branch, Savannah, Georgia, the repository for the receipt, custody, and administration of currently inactive organizational records, preserves those records from the hazards of continued field storage and facilitates the ultimate transfer to the National Archives of those having permanent value. Finally, the Discontinued Projects Branch, Omaha, Nebraska, originally established to settle the "estate" of the Civilian Conservation Corps, is now primarily engaged in receiving, processing, and servicing personnel files of all civilian employees separated from the War Department. The adoption of this unified system of handling inactive records has greatly facilitated replies to inquiries, adjudication of claims, and like matters.

The enactment of the Federal Disposal Act of July 7, 1943, has permitted further expansion of the records administration program. Under the guidance of Robert H. Bahmer and Major Wayne C. Grover, chief of the Records Management Branch, the program's objective has been the establishment insofar as possible of complete control of the disposition of War Department records. Included within the meaning of "disposition" are the destruction of valueless material; the promulgation of disposal schedules providing for the systematic discarding of records of no further value; and the periodic retirement of noncurrent records of permanent value to appropriate facilities, including the National Archives. This undertaking has assumed formidable proportions, since its scope includes all field installations as well as all offices of the War Department. Moreover, it is recognized that no program for the periodic future retirement of records can be launched without appropriate determination being made as to the disposition of the vast quantities of records already accumulated, some of them dating back to the nineteenth century.

Among the offices of the War Department a primary objective has been the establishing of comprehensive disposal schedules applicable to all files accumulations, nonrecord as well as record, in each of the staff divisions and technical services. These schedules are being prepared from the findings of a comprehensive records survey and inventory conducted in each office. Of the approximately 9,100 records series totaling some 284,000 file drawers initially surveyed, preparation of archival disposal schedules is approximately 76 percent complete and that of the comprehensive schedules substantially 41 percent complete. As a corollary to this program, agencies are encouraged to transfer their semi-active records of permanent value to the custody of the War Department Records Branch. Operating under the guidance of Captain Hugh Flick, former archivist of the state of New York, and Sherrod East, formerly of the National Archives, this branch has assumed custody of some

41,000 file drawers of semi-active records destined for ultimate transfer to the National Archives or to other disposition.

Considerable attention also is given to the improvement of current record keeping. Through improved procedures the Records Management Branch has established a program to diminish duplicate filing, increase efficient utilization of files, and facilitate appropriate retention or destruction of records. The program is closely co-ordinated with records disposition and scheduling. It is being applied through the War Department with particular emphasis upon the Army Service Forces and the Adjutant General's Office. Accumulations of inactive and obsolete records in the field are being reduced through the utilization of survey teams trained to identify and evaluate records with a view to the immediate destruction of those for which disposal authority exists, disposal of valueless papers upon receipt of Congressional approval, or transfer of valuable material to the National Archives. Activities in the offices of the War Department and in field installations over the last eight months have resulted in the destruction of 67,000 file drawers of useless records, and the transfer of 41,000 file drawers to the National Archives. Savings accruing from the resulting release of space and equipment, together with receipts from salvage as waste paper, are estimated at $435,000.

Foreign News

Canada

Word has been received from D. E. Cameron, librarian of the University of Alberta at Edmonton, that a government committee is studying the problem of the existing accumulation of public records with a view to the possible establishment of a public record office.

Attention should be called to the significant article by George W. Brown in the March issue of the *Canadian Historical Review* on "The Problem of Public and Historical Records in Canada." This statement describes the current archives situation in Canada and presents the author's concept of a suitable national public records policy.

Colombia

Señor Daniel Samper Ortega, for many years director of the national library, which houses the historical archives of Colombia, died recently. Señor Samper was known to many archivists and librarians in the United States, having addressed the annual meeting of the Inter-American Bibliographical and Library Association in Washington in 1939.

Hawaii

On January 5, 1944, the governor of Hawaii, by virtue of the Hawaiian Defense Act, promulgated Hawaii Defense Act Rule No. 87 providing for

the establishment of a post-war planning division in the territorial Department of Public Works. Among the public works for which tentative plans are now being developed is a new territorial archives building. According to word received from Maude Jones, librarian of the Public Archives Commission, an excellent site has been secured for the building and the plans indicate that the proposed structure will be modern in every respect. It will contain an air-conditioned vault for records storage with a capacity of 96,000 cubic feet, an up-to-date fumigation chamber, adequate microfilm facilities, three searchrooms, and considerable office and workroom space.

Colorado

The May issue of the *Colorado Magazine* carried the following summary of recent archival activities in the state written by Herbert O. Brayer, state archivist:

> In February, 1943, a law was passed by the State Assembly making provision for the disposal or destruction of non-current records in all departments of the state, county and city governments. It also provided that all records having historical value and of no further value to the issuing department should be deposited in the State Archives and become a permanent archival record. Destruction of records is permitted only after the head of the department concerned has certified that they have no administrative value, the Attorney General has determined that they have no legal value, and the State Archivist has given clearance on their historical value.
>
> In November, 1943, also in accordance with the archives law, Herbert O. Brayer was appointed State Archivist and in 1944 Virgil V. Peterson, Associate Archivist. Many departments have applied for authority to destroy records, due to the fact that housing conditions at the Capitol have become acute in practically all state departments. Some departments are in possession of records dating back to the Territorial days. These are being transferred to the State Archives when possible. Recently the Department of State requested authority to destroy twenty-nine tons of records. After a careful survey of these documents, approval was given and they were sold as waste-paper. . . . To date the Employment Security Division has requested authority to destroy four and one-half million records. They are now in the process of destruction. In addition this division has made a request for the microfilming of six million records. Authority for the destruction of these will also be given after a satisfactory photographic copy has been made. . . . In order to make available to all departments of the state this type of service the Archives Division has established a complete microfilm service.

Delaware

The report of the librarian of the Historical Society of Delaware for the year 1943 devotes four pages to a listing of manuscript materials added to the society's collection. Among these are records of the Old Bank of Delaware, the fourth bank to be opened in the United States.

On May 18 a group of archivists and records administrators from Washington, D. C., visited the Delaware Hall of Records in Dover in connection with work in a course on archives administration offered by American University. The group included eleven members of the National Archives staff, Helen L. Chatfield, treasurer of the Society of American Archivists, Fulmer Mood, archivist of the Army Air Forces, and Ernst Posner, adjunct professor of archives administration at American University. After being conducted through the Hall of Records by Leon de Valinger, archivist of Delaware, the group was received by Governor Bacon in the executive chambers of the new statehouse and later entertained at the home of Mrs. Ridgely, president of the Public Archives Commission.

Illinois

One of five known manuscript copies of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address now is in the possession of the Illinois State Library. Known as the Keyes copy because it had been purchased by Senator Henry W. Keyes of New Hampshire shortly after it was written for the benefit of the New York Sanitary Fair, it has been purchased for the state through the contributions of more than a million of the state's school children.

Michigan

The Michigan Historical Collections of the University of Michigan is currently engaged in gathering together materials relating to the careers of Michigan men who held appointive positions during the Grover Cleveland administrations. Among these are James B. Angell, T. M. Cooley, Don M. Dickinson, J. Sterling Morton, W. E. Quinby, J. M. B. Sill, Henry T. Thurber, Edwin F. Uhl, and Edwin Willits. F. C. Bald, who is conducting the search, will be grateful for any assistance in locating papers of these men. The collections recently acquired a large file of the business papers of William B. Mershon, 1856-1943, well-known Michigan industrialist.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Historical Society reports the acquisition of the papers of Clark W. Thompson, superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern Superintendency during the period of the Sioux removal in 1863.

New York

Alexander J. Wall, director of the New-York Historical Society, died on April 15. A member of the staff of the society since 1898, he had served as its director since 1937. He was the author of many bibliographies and monographs on historical subjects and throughout his life was actively concerned with the preservation and care of manuscripts and other historical records. He was a founding member of the Society of American Archivists.

Charles E. Baker has been appointed editor of the New-York Historical Society, succeeding Dorothy C. Barck, librarian. Mr. Baker was formerly editor-in-chief of the New York City Historical Records Survey, co-editor of the *Atlas of Congressional Roll Calls,* and associate editor of the *List and Index of Presidential Executive Orders.* Among the manuscript materials recently acquired by the society are the Pearsall family papers, 1792-1876, papers concerning the collection of customs at the port of New York, 1824-1878, account book and other papers of Citizen Edmund Genet, 1786-1842; records of Company C, twenty-sixth Regiment, New York Volunteers, 1861-1863; and 170 manuscripts of John Quincy Adams Ward, sculptor, 1830-1910.

The Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library has issued its accession list for 1943. It fills eight pages of the April issue of the library's *Bulletin.* Among the larger collections included are (1) the Constable-Pierrepont papers concerning land surveys and sales within New York, supplementing similar materials acquired in 1942; (2) papers of Francis P. Corbin and family, 1716-1899, relating to Georgia plantation management, political matters, and military topics; the papers of John H. Finley, internationally known figure in the fields of education and relief administration, 1900-1940; (4) the Malone theatre collection containing letters from most of the leading figures of the theatrical world during the period, 1872-1910; (5) the business papers, 1804-1894, of Isaiah and John Townsend, New York iron merchants; (6) minutes and proceedings, 1796-1798, of the U. S. Court, District of New York, relating to admiralty, customs, and citizenship cases; and (7) papers of assistant constructor Francis T. Bowles, relating to the construction of the U.S.S. *Texas* and other naval craft and other activities at the Norfolk Navy Yard, 1885-1896.

Arthur Pound, director of the Division of Archives and History and state historian of New York, resigned March 31. Albert B. Corey, head of the Department of History and Government at St. Lawrence University, has been appointed to succeed him.

Aspects of the war records program of New York are described in an article by Hermann F. Robinton, supervisor of public records, in the April

issue of *American City* under the title "Community Participation in Gathering and Preserving Local War Records." The war records activity has been used by the Division of Archives and History to expedite the appointment of county and local historians under the provisions of Sections 1198-1199 of the New York education law. The result is that there are but six vacancies among the county historians. The division is also encouraging the formation of advisory committees to local historians, particularly in the larger cities and counties. It is anticipated that more than 1,600 persons, exclusive of advisory committee members, ultimately will be actively engaged in promoting the cause of public records and local history.

Ohio

The following plea for the erection of a state archives building in Ohio was printed in the May issue of *Museum Echoes*, publication of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, under the title "Yes, We Have Some Archives":

> In fact, we have plenty of archives—enough to fill a large building. Some are jammed into the all-too-crowded library stacks of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society and a great many more are still filed as "dead storage" in the various State offices. In these archives reposes most of the State of Ohio's unwritten history. Like the old woman who lived in the shoe, however, we have so many archives and so little space, equipment or personnel to take care of them that we, too, hardly know what to do.
>
> One of the primary needs for the State of Ohio is a modern, well-equipped, fireproof structure, adequate for the housing of the archives of our great State. This structure might be connected with the Museum building of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society or it might be a separate building adjacent to the excellent reference facilities of the Society's Library and Ohio State University's Law School. It ought to be large enough to allow for at least a period of 25 years' growth and should be built so that further expansion and addition will be possible. The interior should be arranged to facilitate the most economical methods of preserving official records and making them easily available. It should have modern equipment. It should be manned by a well-trained, efficient staff who can organize, arrange, catalogue and index the wealth of material. This staff ought to be administered by a non-political commission, who, together with the chief of the archives, could work out an archival policy for Ohio.
>
> Administration after administration has recognized the desirability of preserving this valuable material. The State has already turned over to the Society tons of its non-current records. Now, when plans are being made for post-war construction, is the time to provide proper housing for the huge mass of State records. Other states are making

such plans. New York and Michigan are the most recent to have provided for archives buildings. What about Ohio? This is a situation worthy of attention.

Pennsylvania

The governor's *Budget Circular* No. 85, dated February 10, 1944, regulating the "disposition of useless records" may be of interest to archivists in other states and is printed below.

Section 524 of the Administrative Code provides as follows:

> "Except as otherwise provided by law, whenever any administrative department, board or commission shall have an accumulation of files of correspondence, reports, records or other papers, which are not needed or useful in the transaction of the current or anticipated future work of such department, board or commission, and which date back a period of four years and more, it shall be the duty of the head of such department, board or commission to submit to the Executive Board a report of that fact, accompanied by a concise statement of the condition, quantity, and character of such papers."

This means that the Executive Board has jurisdiction and decides the disposal of records which had a sufficient value to cause them to be retained for a period of four years. It does not mean that all correspondence, duplicate copies, memorandum slips and the like must be retained for four years before they can be destroyed. Every department, board or commission is its own judge as to what should be retained and for how long. If it decides that record material has value which requires that it be maintained for at least four years, then the Executive Board takes jurisdiction as to its disposal upon the petition by the department, board or commission.

Sections 1305 (d) and 1309 (k) provide that the Department of Public Instruction and the Pennsylvania Historical Commission shall have the power of decision as to the preservation of State Government records of historical value.

Procedure

(1) Departments, boards and commissions may destroy at any time records which they consider of no value which have been retained less than four years. Such records would be casual correspondence, interoffice memorandums on administrative problems such as personnel, supply purchases, requisitions, duplicate copies of records which were made for a temporary purpose and items of like nature.

(2) For records which were of such value that they have been retained for a period of four years or more but it is now decided that they are useless, petition must be made to the Executive Board under the law. This petition should be in the form of a memorandum from the head

of the department stating that the records described on an attached list are of no further value and recommending that approval be given for their destruction. Lists accompanying such memorandum should be submitted in six copies.

(3) Before submitting the memorandum to the Executive Board, the petition and the lists should be presented to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for his consideration and statement that the records are deemed to be of no historical value. This statement of the Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designated agent will be endorsed on the memorandum and on each page of the list. If any of the listed records are deemed to be of historical value, the Superintendent of Public Instruction will indicate such records upon the list.

(4) Certified copies of the Executive Board's action will be furnished the petitioning agency, whereupon the records to be destroyed will be delivered to the Department of Property and Supplies and those to be retained will be delivered to the Department of Public Instruction.

Departmental File Policy

When the files are studied for disposal of useless material, it is a good plan for each department to decide its administrative policy for future disposal of material of the same nature and to instruct the persons in charge of the files to follow this policy for disposal when any accumulation shall have reached the age decided upon.

Microfilming

Also when the files are studied, notes should be made of what records of permanent value are in such quantity that they might be microfilmed to save storage space. The State will likely avail itself of this process after the war.

At the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, representing ninety-seven historical and patriotic societies with a combined membership of forty thousand persons, three resolutions were passed relating to public records in the state. The first calls attention to the fact that the irreplaceable archives of the state "are now crowded into wholly inadequate space in two rooms of the Education Building," while other states with less historical background have built or are planning to build adequate depositories for their archives. Therefore the governor, the Postwar Planning Commission, and the General Assembly are asked to plan for the construction of an archives building for Pennsylvania "on such a scale as to be commensurate with the dignity and the importance of Pennsylvania . . . designed and planned with a view to accommodating the records of the veterans of the several wars and in particular all types of records and other materials which will reflect the story of the military history of Pennsylvania."

The second resolution calls attention to the careful disposition of records

during the current waste paper salvage campaign that resulted from an executive order requiring that all papers proposed for disposal be examined by representatives of the state archives and the historical commission prior to their destruction, and commends the governor for his action in the hope that "this will lead to the development of measures which will guarantee the future protection and preservation of important . . . records and to the deposit of the older and more valuable records of all Departments in the State Archives. . . ."

The last resolution calls attention to the value of borough, city, county, and state records to the historian and to the fact that "these records suffer damage and are stored in ways to make them inaccessible to the historian"; and urges that the federation, the Department of Public Instruction, the state archives, and the historical commission co-operate in preparing and issuing a bulletin on practical methods of repairing, preserving, and storing inactive records.

South Carolina

The South Carolina Historical Society announces the opening of the papers of Robert Francis Withers Allston (1801-1864), presented in 1933, with temporary restrictions, by Mrs. Charles Albert Hill, daughter of Governor Allston. The collection, some nine thousand items in extent, includes plantation records, business letters, and the correspondence of the Allston family through three generations.